

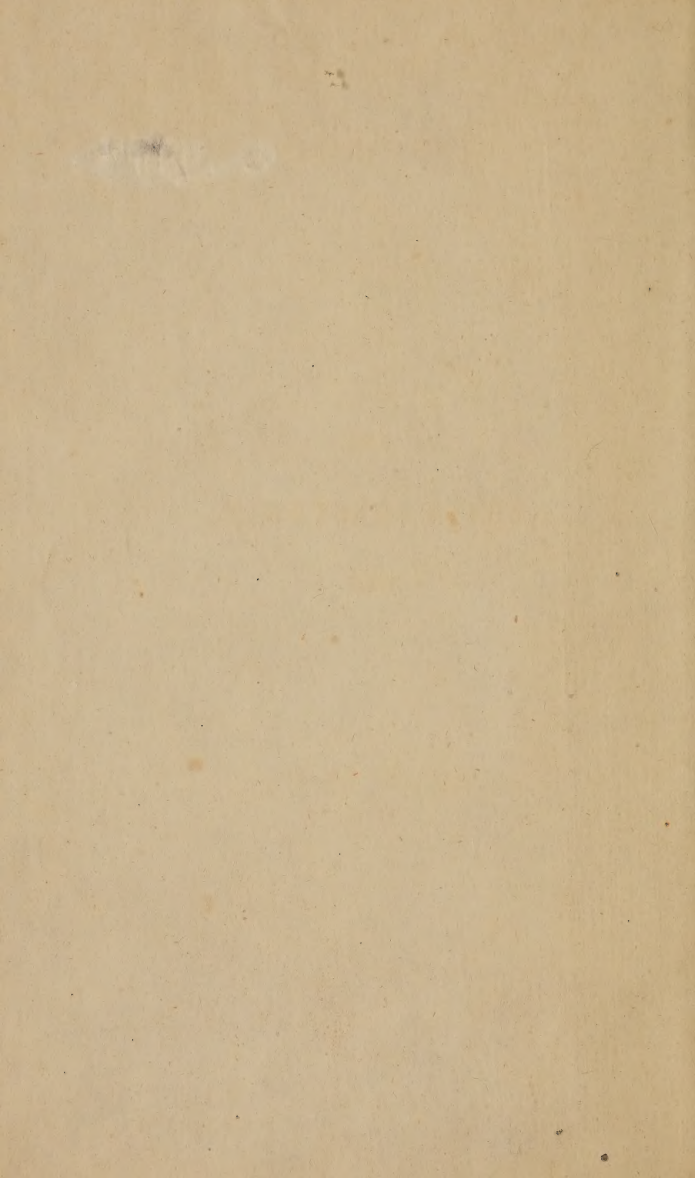
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THE  
BOYLE LECTURES,  
1857.



EIGHT DISCOURSES  
ON.  
THE MIRACLES;

PREACHED IN THE  
PARISH CHURCH OF  
ST. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS,  
IN THE YEAR 1857.

AT THE  
LECTURE FOUNDED BY THE HON. ROBERT BOYLE.

BY  
WILLIAM GILSON HUMPHRY, B.D.,  
VICAR.

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LONDON:  
JOHN W. PARKER & SON, WEST STRAND.

MDCCCLVIII.





THESE discourses were delivered on the 8th November, 1857, and seven following Sundays. They were composed without any view to their being published; and I should have hesitated to comply with the request which has been made to me for their publication, had I not felt sure that by many of those who heard them, my dear Congregation of St. Martin's, they would be kindly and affectionately received. I will hope therefore, that unworthy as they are of their subject, they will not go forth altogether without a blessing — such a blessing as may attend even upon a dinner of herbs, “where love is.”

JAN. 1, 1858.

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# LECTURE I.

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NOTICE OF ROBERT BOYLE  
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GENERAL VIEW OF THE MIRACLES.

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ECCL. II, 26.—“*For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge and joy.*”

IN commencing this discourse it is necessary for me to inform you, that I have lately been appointed by the Trustees under the will of the Hon. Robert Boyle, to the Boyle Lectureship, an office which is held for the term of three years, and by the conditions of which I am required to deliver in this church during the present year, and in each of the two following years, a series of eight lectures on a subject connected with the evidences of our Holy Religion. In discharge of this duty, I propose to take the miracles of our blessed Lord, as my subject for the present year. I shall desire to expound to you in a familiar and practical way, some few of the mighty works which were wrought



by the Saviour in proof of his divine authority and power; and regarding them as “apples of gold in pictures of silver,” believing that the circumstances which attend them, and which form as it were their frame-work, are of no less interest to us than the miracles themselves, I shall sometimes leave the signs and wonders to speak for themselves, and shall dwell rather upon the incidents by which they were accompanied. I would hope that I may assist you by God’s grace to picture to yourselves this portion of the sacred history in a livelier manner; that I may explain some things which may have seemed to you obscure, and may suggest some reflections which you will follow up by yourselves in your private meditations. My chief object, however, will be a practical one; and I shall endeavour to show that in the account of the miracles, as they are related in the four Gospels, we have very much that is profitable to us, not only for the confirmation of our faith, but for our spiritual edification and guidance.

Undoubtedly we should miss a great part of the instruction which the miracles were intended to convey, if we were to regard them only as displays of infinite power, and proofs of Christ’s love for mankind, overlooking the practical significance with which so many, if not all of them are endued. To draw your attention to this, to enlarge upon the lessons which the narrative inculcates, to open to you the indirect teaching

of our Lord, the precepts which he dropt as it were by the way, will be an object to be constantly kept in view by me. For though at the time when this Lecture was founded, 170 years ago, it may have been necessary for the preacher to stand upon the defensive, and to argue with the unbeliever, and to try by reasoning to bring over his hearers to the faith, yet at the present day, addressing a congregation of those who profess and call themselves Christians, I deem it more useful to insist upon the practical view of our religion, remembering this, that if perchance there be among my hearers any who feel doubts as to the truth of the religion which they profess, even these may be led to a clearer and stronger faith, if they will receive and act upon the practical views which are put before them. For this is one way of satisfying ourselves of the truth of Christianity, to try it, and act as if it were true; "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me; if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."\* This declaration, addressed by our Lord to the half-believing Jews, is of the deepest import, and needs to be earnestly insisted upon by his ministers at the present day.

But before I enter further upon my subject, it seems right that I should give you some ac-

\* John vii, 16, 17.

count of the eminent man, who was the founder of this Lectureship. His memory has in some degree been kept alive unto this day, by the discourses which have been annually preached in one or other of the churches of the metropolis, in pursuance of his bequest. But I think it not likely that the Boyle Lectures have been given in this church within the recollection of any of you, for many years have elapsed since they were last delivered here.\* It seems to me therefore that on this occasion the lectures may well be introduced by a short notice of their founder.† And if his name may anywhere be mentioned with honour, it surely may be among ourselves ; for here his remains were deposited, under the chancel of the old parish church ; here also his funeral sermon was preached by one of the most celebrated prelates of those times, the learned Bishop Burnet ; and the passage which the preacher took for his text upon that occasion, I have taken for mine to-day ; “ God giveth to man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge and joy ; ” words which direct our attention to the wisdom, the knowledge, and the christian joy which dwelt in the famous founder of this Lecture, while they also remind us, that those

\* By Dr. Saunders.

† The particulars which follow are chiefly derived from Birch's Life of Boyle, and from Bishop Burnet's funeral Sermon.

happy qualities are the gifts of God, and that He disposes of them at His pleasure upon the man who is good in His sight, and not upon those who are good in the sight of men.

And certainly it appears that Robert Boyle was preeminently endowed with those excellent gifts. It is no great thing to say of him or of any man, that he had what are commonly called the gifts of fortune, of noble birth and ample wealth, because however much they may raise a man aloft in the sight of his contemporaries, they of themselves cannot gild his name when he is gone, nor embalm his memory so that it shall be preserved to future generations. Yet we must not omit to say that the person of whom we speak was possessed of those advantages, and that in his case they were not a curse but a blessing, since he used them for the good of men, and for the glory of God. He was also gifted with extraordinary powers of understanding, which he devoted to the advancement of the arts and sciences, and by means of which he was enabled to make many useful inventions and discoveries. He published a vast number of learned treatises, by which he greatly promoted the cause of learning, and attained to the highest reputation not in this country alone, but throughout all Europe. Though placed by Providence in circumstances of ease and affluence, he lived as laborious a life as if he had to maintain himself by the sweat of his brow. He devoted

all his time to study, and suffered none of his spare minutes to pass in idleness. Thus he raised himself to the foremost place in the world of science, and was the admiration alike of his own countrymen, and of all enlightened foreigners who resorted to this metropolis: and yet, though he lived scarcely 200 years ago, his fame is now known only to the learned few; the six ponderous volumes which contain his works are little read; other discoverers and inventors have arisen, and cast into the shade the labours which he so successfully prosecuted for the benefit of mankind. A striking example to remind us that earthly renown, even when most deserved, and built upon the surest foundations that this world can supply, is precarious and transitory as the morning mist!

But he built upon other foundations, which are not of this earth. The fame and glory of the world he sought not, and when it came to him unsought, he was not corrupted by it, nor led to set his affections upon it.

In the account which he himself has left of his early years, he says that he was led to a serious and lasting concern for the salvation of his soul by a thunderstorm, which startled him from his sleep in the dead of night. At the first moment it made him think that the end of the world was come; and when that terror was overpast, it caused him to reflect how unprepared he was for the judgment day. Have none of us been alarmed



for a moment in a similar manner, in the midst of our sinful courses? Indeed, I believe that the lightning flash has often flashed into the sinner's conscience, and the thunderclap has made him start, and think of the crack of doom. But the terror has passed away—he has said to himself, the Lord was not in the thunder; and if he has moralised upon the matter at all, it has only been to blame himself for being so scared by an empty noise. It was otherwise with the person of whom we are now speaking. He felt, as he well might feel without any superstitious fancy, that it was a call from God; and like St. Paul after the voice had spoken to him from Heaven, he was not disobedient to the heavenly calling.

The Bishop who preached the funeral sermon was able to speak with truth of the holiness of his life, the benevolence of his disposition, the largeness and charitableness of his heart, and also of the great public services which he rendered to the cause of true religion. “He was constant to the church” said the preacher; “but though he never resorted to any assemblies of the non-conformists, he ever thought charitably of their persons, and plentifully relieved their necessities when they were in distress. He loved no narrow thoughts, nor low or superstitious opinions in religion, and therefore as he did not shut himself up within a party, so neither did he shut out any party from him. When he differed from any, he expressed himself in so humble and obliging a

way, that he never treated any person with neglect. And if at any time he saw cause to speak severely to any, it was never with passion or with any reproachful expression. And as he was careful to give those who conversed with him no cause or colour for displeasure, so he was yet more careful of those who were absent, never to speak ill of any ; in which he was the exactest man I ever knew. If the conversation became hard upon any absent person, he would presently be silent, and if the subject was too long dwelt on, he would at last interfere, and divert it, if he could by raillery, and if not, by reproof. Whatever he was in the sight of man, how pure and spotless soever his character appeared to the world, he was in reality the same in his most secret recesses. It was never discovered that there was anything hid under all this appearance of goodness, or that there was any dissimulation or hypocrisy beneath it ; for he concealed both his piety and his charity as much as he could." He assisted many of the French protestants who came over to this country at that time to take refuge from persecution, and assisted them in such a way, that they never knew the hand which befriended them ; the preacher himself was often the means of conveying his bounty to them, and he says, that when at last death had withdrawn their benefactor, they would perhaps begin to surmise who he was.

Thus did he adorn the doctrine of God his

Saviour in his private life and demeanour. But it is especially interesting at the present day to read of the public services which he rendered to the Christian Faith. At his own expense he caused the Bible to be translated into the Malay language, and circulated in the British possessions in the East Indies. He also had an edition of the Bible prepared in the Irish language, and distributed freely in the sister isle. The work of which he gave so noble an example, the translation of the Scriptures into foreign tongues, has, since his time, been carried on by two charitable Societies;\* and there is scarcely an island or settlement under the British dominion, the inhabitants of which may not now read some portion at least of that holy Book in their native language; but the example which he set in this matter, before it was taken up by the Christian Church at large, deserves to be ever had in honour. Moreover, he gave a large sum for the establishment of missionaries in North America, long before there was any public society formed for that purpose;† and what is still more worthy of notice at the present moment, he addressed a letter in the year 1676 to the East India Company, strongly urging upon that body, that they

\* The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

† The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was not established till the year 1701.

should do something for the propagation of the Faith among the natives in whose country they had such flourishing factories. "It seemed to me," he says, "very fit that we whose endeavours God has signally prospered, should pay Him some little acknowledgment of His many blessings, and that remembering ourselves to be Christians as well as merchants, we should attempt to bring those countries some spiritual good things, from which we have so largely brought back our temporal wealth. The way," he adds, "I leave to your wisdom, not despairing that if but as much be done at first as may be carried without considerable opposition, the goodness of the work will procure a blessing upon it, that will make it prosperous." This appeal, written 180 years ago, might have been put forth with still greater reason in the present year. It was unsuccessful at the time, though accompanied and enforced by a liberal donation; and the policy which dictated its rejection has been persevered in almost without alteration. What little has been done to make the natives of India acquainted with the glad tidings of the Gospel, has been done, not by the ruling powers, but by the exertions of private Societies, the Government coldly standing aloof from any attempt to evangelize that benighted people, and even giving its countenance to their idolatrous ceremonies and processions. Whether that policy has borne good fruit—whether it is right—whether it is such a policy as a great

Christian nation ought to pursue towards its heathen subjects—these are questions which the calamities of the last few months have forced upon our consideration, and a decision must be shortly come to upon them, in which may God's good Spirit direct and guide us to such counsels as shall be acceptable to Him!

The concluding act of this good man's life was in keeping with the rest. It was his dying desire to make provision that there should always be in this metropolis a person whose especial duty it should be to answer the gainsayer and unbeliever; and with this object he left to certain Trustees a bequest for the foundation of the Lectureship, which, after passing through many hands, has now devolved on me.\*

After having, last Sunday, described to you the character of the Evangelist St. Luke, one of the first preachers of the Gospel, I am glad to have had the opportunity of bringing forward out of the history of later times an example to show how great may be the influence of the Gospel on the hearts of men.

Using his wealth and his abilities for the benefit and instruction of mankind—holy and upright in his life—kind and charitable in his conversation—

\* The Trustees from whom I received my appointment were the Duke of Devonshire, the Earl of Burlington, and my late beloved master and patron, Bishop Blomfield. My immediate predecessor was Dr. Wordsworth.



the bountiful friend of the poor and needy—and dispensing his bounties with so much secrecy, that his left hand scarcely knew what his right hand was doing—zealous in promoting the spread of the Gospel at home and among heathen nations, he shone as one of the chief lights of his generation, one of the brightest and purest saints of our Reformed Church. And I think it is a good thing sometimes to turn for a moment from the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, and to look at the practical illustrations of those doctrines and precepts which are held up to us in the lives of good Christian men, long since departed this life, and entered as we trust, into a better state.

To turn in this way from the precept to the example, is like glancing the eye from the printed page of a book, to the illustrations presented on the opposite side. We are thus led to feel more strongly the reality of our religion, to see the great effects which it is capable of producing, and so we give ourselves to it with a stronger faith, and with the hope that it may have some great effect upon us also, that by means of it there may be given us a large measure of those best gifts of God, of which the wise man speaks in my text, “Knowledge and wisdom and joy.”

But I have dwelt upon the remembrance of this good man longer than I had intended, and it is time that I should come to that which I had proposed as the subject of my discourses, the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour.

What is a Miracle? The word itself means simply *a wonder*, a wonderful thing; and it reminds us of what the Psalmist says of the Almighty, that "He only doeth great wonders, for His mercy endureth for ever." But what sort of wonders do we mean when we talk of miracles? we mean wonderful works, by which the ordinary laws of nature were, for the time, set aside and superseded. Christ, sometimes by his touch and sometimes by his word, restored the sick man to health. He rebuked the stormy sea, and there was a great calm. He trod the deep as if it had been a marble floor. He commanded the devils, and they went out of the men whom they had possessed. He fed the multitude of five thousand men from a store of food no greater than could be carried by a little child. He said to the dead man Lazarus, "Come forth"; and the grave yielded up its prey, the dead body lived again. These were miracles, things which could not have happened in the ordinary course of nature.

For what purpose then, were these things done by Jesus? Was it merely out of his great love and compassion for the ills of men, that he healed their infirmities and supplied their wants? Did he do these great wonders for no other purpose but to show that "His mercy endureth for ever"? Doubtless, they are to be regarded as the tokens of his boundless love and compassion for the children of men—but they are something more than this; for we find him

continually appealing to them as the evidence of his divine authority; the credentials, so to speak, of his mission from on high.

When the two disciples of John the Baptist came and asked Jesus, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"\* He answered by shewing them the miracles which he wrought. "Go," he said, "and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." This was his only answer. When they asked him if he was the Christ, he pointed to his miracles. And so he told the Jewish people, "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."†

Here he tells us that the miracles were a testimony unto him, proving or bearing witness that the Father had sent him. And again he said "Though ye believe not me, believe the works."‡ And he used the same argument to his disciples, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else," i.e. if ye will not believe my word, "believe me for the very works' sake."§ If his own declarations concerning himself were discredited, he referred men to his *works*, as he called them, his "miracles," as an evidence, notorious, unimpeach-

\* Matt. xi. 3, 4. † John v. 36. ‡ John x. 38.  
§ John xiv. 11.

able, and level to every man's understanding. And on this account we sometimes find in the Scripture that they are called *signs*, i.e. tokens and pledges of something beyond themselves, outward and visible signs of the divine grace that was hidden in Christ. Thus, we read (Mark xvi. 20) that after Christ had ascended into heaven, the disciples went forth, and preached everywhere, and the Lord "confirmed the word with signs following." When the Jews saw him acting as one that had authority, driving out of the temple those who made his Father's house a house of merchandise, they required of him a proof of his authority, "What sign shewest thou unto us," they said, "seeing that thou doest these things?"\*

And we may further observe, that though neither his teaching nor his miracles, nor both together, produced any deep influence upon the minds of the people in general, for he came unto his own, as the Apostle says, and his own received him not; yet there were some individuals who saw and believed. Thus, at the very beginning of his ministry, when Nathaniel had a miraculous proof that Christ's all-seeing eye had been upon him as he sat under the fig-tree, he exclaimed, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel."† It was the miraculous draught of fishes which constrained Peter to cast himself down at the feet of Jesus, and

\* John ii. 18.

† John i. 49.

to exclaim, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."\* And when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, the first thing which he said in explanation of his so coming to him was this, "Rabbi, we know Thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him."† The man who was born blind, when he received his sight, protested, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."‡ This was a simple but unanswerable argument, and he was not to be driven from it by all the frowns and threats of the angry Scribes and Pharisees.

Still these deep impressions appear to have been produced only upon a few individuals. The Pharisees in general hardened their hearts against the miracles of Jesus. "We know," said they, "that this man is a sinner."§ And again, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils."|| As to the multitude, when Jesus fed them with bread in the wilderness, they were ready enough to cry, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."¶ And no wonder; for had they not been moved by such a wonder as that, surely the very stones would have cried out. But when he offered to that same multitude the bread of life, when he gave them a morsel of doctrine, a hard saying or two, they melted away from his presence, and

\* Luke v. 8.      † John iii. 2.      ‡ John ix. 33.

§ John ix. 24.    || Luke xi. 15.    ¶ John vi. 14.



followed him no more. And St. John says, that at the very close of his ministry, "though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not in him."\*

Take heed, my brethren, that there be not in you the same evil heart of unbelief. To you have been made known the miracles which Jesus did in his life, and also the crowning wonders of his resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the promised Comforter; and you are well aware how all the law and the voices of the prophets had their fulfilment in him. And you know how his Church was established upon earth in spite of all that the world could do against it. Be not indifferent to the doctrine which comes to you with such manifold tokens that it is from God. Receive it not into your lips only, but into your hearts. Act upon it. That, that is to believe unto salvation. That, and nothing less than that is faith. The devils believe, and tremble. But he who has faith believes, and acts upon his belief. He carries it out in his life—and yet not he, but the grace of God that is in him. For since he has a hearty desire to please God, he is enabled by God's grace to fulfil his desire; and, in fulfilling it, he finds "wisdom and knowledge and joy."

\* John xii. 37.

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## LECTURE II.

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### THE HEALING OF THE DAUGHTER OF THE SYRO-PHœNICIAN WOMAN.

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MATT. XV. 28.—“*Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*”

It was said of our blessed Lord by one of his Apostles,\* that he “went about doing good.” He was not stationary in one place, but went about continually ; now in the Holy City and now in the wilderness, now on the mountain and now by the side of the lake ; He was always going about, and always doing good. And so it came to pass that there was scarcely any part of the Holy Land which was not printed with his footsteps ; and all the people had an opportunity of hearkening to his voice, and of appealing to his loving-kindness to help them in their afflictions. Out of the whole multitude of miracles which he wrought, not more than thirty-three in all have

\* St. Peter, Acts x. 38.

been recorded by the Evangelists ; and these few appear to have been placed on record and circumstantially related, for the sake of the special instruction which each one of them affords. In pursuance of the plan which I laid down last Sunday, I shall proceed to consider some few of these miracles, with a view chiefly to the practical lessons contained in them, regarding them as illustrations of the doctrines and precepts, and indeed of the whole system of the Gospel.

It is related in the passage from which my text is taken, that Jesus, in one of his journeys, visited a very remote corner of the land, the coasts, that is to say the borders\* of Tyre and Sidon. What was his purpose in going there ? he himself said that he was not sent save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And yet in those parts there were very few, if any, of the house of Israel. It was the northern extremity of Galilee of the Gentiles, a district still occupied by the ancient race of the Canaanites, or

\* The word *coast*, when the Bible was translated into English, meant a *border*, and is always to be understood in that sense in our authorized version, except when the *sea-coast* is specially mentioned. But when the *coasts* or *borders* of a district are spoken of, we are generally to understand that the district itself, and not merely its boundary line, is intended ; *e. g.* Matt. ii. 16, "All the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the *coasts* thereof ;" *i. e.*, in the city and *district* of Bethlehem."

Syro-phœnicians, as they were also called. He did not go there to make a public display of himself, nor to preach the kingdom of heaven. On the contrary, we are told by St. Mark that when he arrived there he entered into a house, and would have no man to know it. He did not intend to show himself openly, nor to make known who he was. The hour was not yet come when the Gentiles were to be received by him.

Why then did he go to that land of strangers, to the borders of Tyre and Sidon? Tyre and Sidon had long ago carried themselves very proudly, and despised the Almighty. And He had sent his prophets to denounce His woes upon them. The prophecies had come true, the woes had been accomplished. Tyre was "forgotten" by the nations, and Sidon was "ashamed."\* Was he going now to behold those cities in their low estate, perchance to lift them up and comfort them? Was he going to tell them that it would be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment† than for Chorazin and Bethsaida, the unbelieving cities in which he had done so many wonderful works? His journey was not undertaken for any such purpose as this. Yet we may be sure he did not travel so far without an object; and what the object was, we shall be at no loss to understand.

\* Isaiah xxiii. 1, 4; Ezech. xxvi—xxviii. xxxii. 30.

† Luke x. 14.

We have said that when he arrived, he entered into a house, that no one might know of his being there. But the Evangelist adds that "He could not be hid." He could not be hid; why could he not? Because it is written, he that seeks shall find. He *cannot* be hidden to them that seek him. There was a woman of the country, that is to say, a Canaanitish or Syro-phœnician woman, whose daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. She had heard of Jesus, "the Son of David." By God's grace, she had been moved to put her faith in him. She believed that he was both able and willing to cure her daughter. She therefore searched for him, and discovered him.

But the same Scripture which says, "Seek and ye shall find," also says, "Ask and ye shall receive." The first part of this promise being fulfilled, the second part must surely follow. Yet it was at this point that the anxious parent experienced the greatest difficulty. She asked again and again, and did *not* receive. She applied to him for help, calling upon him by a high and holy name. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Thus she showed her faith in him, not merely as a worker of miracles, but as the promised Messiah, who was to come of the lineage of David. Yet he turned away, and answered her not a word. But as he could not be hid from her, so neither could he be deaf to her entreaty. She pursued him with cries and

supplications; she threw herself at his feet. Then he spoke to her, but it was only to put her aside, to decline her request. She was not daunted even by this. She ventured to expostulate with him. She did not for a moment relax in her suit. At length he had proved her sufficiently; and then he yielded, we may be sure with joy, and as it seems not without wonder, to her earnest prayer. He exclaimed, in the words of my text, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." He marvelled at the faith of the Gentile woman, as he had before marvelled at the unbelief of his his own countrymen.\* I need scarcely add that her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And we are informed immediately afterwards, that Jesus departed from that place.

So far therefore as we can see, the main object of our blessed Lord in visiting the coasts of Tyre and Sidon was that he might perform this miracle. And though at the first he concealed himself, so that the woman was obliged to search for him, though when she found him, he made as if he would not grant her petition, yet all the while he was fully purposed to do what she desired. So far, I say, as appears from the Gospel history, this was the only object of his journey. And of this, at any rate we are certain, that it was never his intention to refuse her; He did not change his mind; for in him there is no

\* Mark vi. 6.

variableness, neither shadow of turning. He was intent upon doing her good; he put himself in her way for that very purpose, yet he refrained himself; he held back his loving-kindness, in order that her faith might be duly tried and tested, and that she might become an example and a lesson to us and to all generations.

Let us then consider a little more attentively the circumstances of this miracle, in order that we may see what benefit was intended to ourselves, as well as to the Canaanitish woman, by the journey of our Lord to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. It is necessary therefore to bear in mind that when he concealed himself in the house, when he turned away from the woman without speaking to her, even when he appeared finally to refuse her prayer, all this was done not from any want of kindness, but from the abundance of his love, with the intention that her faith should be made perfect through trial; like as silver is purified seven times in the fire. On the other hand the Apostles who were with him, wished him to heal her at once, in order that there might be an end of her importunities. "Send her away" they said, "for she crieth after us." Were they then for once, more merciful, more tender hearted than their Lord? No; but they wished her prayer to be granted, not so much out of compassion towards her, as because they were vexed by her following them. Like the unjust judge, who would rise and attend to the widow's



suit, because she troubled him, so these disciples had some selfishness mingled with their charity. And how often it happens to us, that we do a kindness in a hurry, almost without consideration, and perhaps take to ourselves credit for being so prompt, so easily persuaded, when in reality we have only been doing that which was most convenient, least troublesome to ourselves. Not so does our Heavenly Father deal His mercies; but while He sends some quickly, unexpectedly perhaps, even before we ask for them; others He withholds, and leaves us to repeat our applications for them again and again. He chooses the time and the occasion which is most convenient for ourselves; and those things which would be hurtful for us, He refuses though we ask them ever so often; but He gives us some good things instead.

But again, when the disciples had thus spoken to Jesus in behalf of the woman, he answered by telling them, that inasmuch as she was a Canaanite, and not a Jewess, she was not one of the people to whom He was especially sent, and for whom his mercies were in the first instance intended. "I am not sent," he said, "but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." His preaching and teaching were confined to the Jews; to them the Messiah had been promised; by them he was expected; to them he came. When the fulness of the time arrived that the Gentiles also should hear the word of the Lord,

then he sent forth his Apostles to expound the Gospel in all lands. Here is another instance where the mercies of God have been kept back for a season ; and it is quite in keeping with the delay which our Lord allowed to take place, before he healed the daughter of the Canaanitish woman. We may perhaps think it strange that the glad tidings of salvation should have been locked up for ever so short a time in a corner of the earth, instead of being transmitted with all imaginable speed from one end of the world to the other. But we may be sure that there was as good a reason for the delay, as there was for the apparent unwillingness and backwardness of our Lord to work the miracle which is before us. If some have only been brought into the Lord's vineyard at the eleventh hour, while others were called at the first, we perhaps cannot account for the difference, but we know that it has been ordered by Him who doeth all things well. It is quite evident that God's ways in this matter are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts ; and for the present it is enough for us to know this.

But we may proceed to another part of the narrative. We find ; that when the woman came and threw herself at the feet of Jesus, pleading before him with all the energy of parental affection, with all the confidence of undoubting faith, He repeated to her the answer which he had given to the Disciples, though not exactly in the same

form of words. He told her that it was not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs ; which was as much as to say, that the Gentiles could no more claim those blessings which he was conferring on the Jews, than the dogs in a rich man's house were entitled to the food which he sets before his children. Many beggars upon receiving such an answer as this, would consider it useless to press their entreaties any further ; and some, perhaps, would be disposed to resent a figure of speech, which might seem to be somewhat harsh and forbidding. But the woman of Canaan took a different view of the matter ; she did not despair—she harboured no resentful feeling—she had a point to gain, and was intent only upon that—she meekly accepted the comparison made by our Lord, and with ready wit contrived to find in it a reason why her prayer should be complied with. She reminded him, that though the children were not deprived of their food in order that the dogs might be fed, yet it was customary for the dogs to receive the fragments which were over and above what was eaten at the table. “ Truth, Lord,” she said ; “ yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.” She prayed that some small portion of his goodness, the overflowings of his mercy, might be extended to her ; for she knew there was enough to satisfy her wants, without diminishing the portion of the Jews. Thus did she answer him, as it were, out of his own mouth ; while he

for his part was not loth to be so argued with and refuted. He no longer restrained his loving kindness. For all his apparent harshness, he now made amends by one sentence full of mercy and love. "O, woman," he exclaimed, "great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Happy are they, who like the Canaanitish woman, in all the crosses and discouragements which they encounter, see only a fresh motive for exertion, a fresh ground on which to rest their applications to the throne of grace. They may be baffled for a time, they may often fail, but they will succeed at last, and then their joy will be full.

Indeed, this is the great lesson which we derive from the miracle before us. Like all the other miracles, it proves beyond dispute the almighty power of him who wrought it. But besides that which it has in common with all his wondrous works, it teaches us this especial lesson, that we ought to keep stedfast our faith in God, and continually renew our supplications and prayers to him, under every circumstance of vexation, delay, and discouragement, in which we may be placed.

What our Lord elsewhere declares in a parable, he here shows by a miracle, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.\* Even as the patriarch Jacob wrestled with the angel at Penuel, and prevailed against him, so we are invited to

\* Luke, xviii. 1.

wrestle with the Lord our God in prayer, until He have mercy upon us.

For that He will have mercy upon us, we must never allow ourselves to doubt. Yet there are seasons when it is very difficult not to doubt it; and few of us, I suppose, are without such seasons. There are times when we are compassed about with calamity as with a flood—all things seem to go wrong with us. One after another our fondest hopes have been extinguished; the fountain of our life has been poisoned; the bitter waters overflow our soul, the sweet are dried up. We have found treachery and falsehood where we had looked for confidence and truth. The ties that held us to this world, the warm affections, the sympathies of our nature have been wounded, and wounded again, till they are well nigh past feeling; we know not on what side to look for consolation. Perhaps we have in some degree foreseen the troubles that were coming upon us, and have endeavoured to provide against them; and among other means of deliverance, we have not neglected prayer. We have been constant in our supplications to God, beseeching Him to remove the evil out of the way. But it has come upon us, nevertheless. To all human appearance, there has been no answer given to our prayers. We are almost tempted to think it would have been just as well with us, if we had never prayed at all, never drawn near to the throne of grace. Or if there are no afflictions from without, per-

haps there is a worse evil, which has its origin within us, even in our souls. Perhaps we are possessed by some besetting sin, which we loathe and detest. Though we pray against it, though we struggle against it continually, we have not yet been able to overcome it—it clings to us still. Sometimes, in our unguarded moments, it takes us unawares—sometimes, after a struggle, it overpowers us. We are its servants, and we know ourselves to be so. We go on our knees, and make our sorrowful confession and repentance before God; we pray for forgiveness; we pray for grace to assist us in the time to come; but this has been done again and again, till we are almost out of heart. We begin to think we are so fast in prison, that we cannot get forth; and we are disposed to exclaim: Has God forgotten to be gracious, and is his mercy clean gone for ever?

Such trial and searching of spirit we must expect in the course of our Christian warfare; and it is at least some consolation to know that other men, better and holier than ourselves, have experienced the same sinking of heart, the same misgivings as to the righteous judgment of God. We know that even David, who received such signal proofs of the Divine power, was sometimes sorely perplexed, both by the trouble which befell him from without, and by the sinfulness of his own heart; so that he uttered words of complaint and upbraiding, as if God had forsaken him, and

ceased to hear him. Who does not remember those bitter words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint? O my God, I cry in the day time and thou hearest not; and in the night season also I take no rest; and thou continuest holy, O thou worship of Israel." Such was the complaint of David; but how did he end that very Psalm which he began so heavily; as he meditated upon God's dealings with him, and thought of his marvellous works, the storm in his soul subsided, and there was a great calm; his confidence in God was restored, and this was the strain in which he went on to speak, "I will declare Thy name unto my Brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee. O praise the Lord ye that fear Him; magnify Him all ye of the seed of Israel, and fear Him, all ye seed of Israel. For He hath *not* despised nor abhorred the low estate of the poor, He hath *not* hid his face from him; but when he called unto him He heard him." At another time the Psalmist falls again into a strain of sadness and dejection. "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in a place of darkness and in the deep. Thine indignation lieth hard upon me, and thou hast vexed me with all thy storms. Unto Thee have I cried, O Lord; and early shall my prayer come before Thee. Lord, why abhorrest Thou my soul, and hidest Thou Thy face from me." Can any thing be more gloomy and



desponding than such words as these? Yet the very next Psalm begins in a joyful strain, as if to tell us that the cloud which hung so heavily upon him, had been entirely removed. "My song," he says, "shall be of the loving-kindness of the Lord; with my mouth will I ever be shewing Thy truth, from generation to generation."\* And we may remember one who was greater than David, and who yet in his dying agony took up David's cry of woe, and exclaimed "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"† Such was the anguish with which his spirit was parted from his body. Yet we know that God did not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer that Holy One to see corruption; but made known to him the ways of life, and placed him at His own right hand, where there is the fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore.

We see, therefore, that both David and David's Lord knew what it is to be desolate in spirit, to feel alone in the world, forsaken by God and man; and certainly we have no right to expect that we shall pass through life without experiencing the same trial. But of this we may be sure, that if we have sought the Lord in the right way, the feeling of which I speak will be as a passing cloud, and will pass away from us as it did from the sorrowing David and the dying Christ. Our heaviness may endure for the night,

\* Ps. lxxxiii—lxxxix.

† Ps. xvi, 10—12. Acts xi, 28

but our joy will come in the morning. The dove will not always come back to the ark. The prayer which we so often send forth, will not always seem to return into our own bosom unheeded and unanswered. Nay, the truth is that none of our prayers, if they are offered in the right spirit, are ever turned back upon us. They all go up as a memorial before God. They are all received by Him, and will be answered in due time. Not a sparrow falls to the ground, not a sigh wings its way towards heaven but He knows of it. He sees and pities us. Even now He is preparing an answer to our prayers: not that answer perhaps which we are fondly expecting and hoping; but something which is in reality much better for us than the gratification of our short-sighted hopes and expectations. The cripple at the beautiful gate asked an alms of the Apostles; his prayer, as we know, was answered, but not in the way that he expected. There was given to him something far beyond silver and gold. So it will be with us. Those things which we ask amiss will be withheld. Those things which for our ignorance we cannot, or for our unworthiness we dare not ask, He will vouchsafe to grant us. We pray for those things, which as we think are most for our benefit. It is wise to do so, yet it must always be with this condition, not my will, but Thine, be done; not what I think best, but what Thou knowest to be best, vouchsafe to give me! We ask Him to make haste to help us:

“Make no long tarrying, O my God.” This is well. The sense of our great need, and of our entire dependance upon Him, may well make us very urgent and pressing for assistance. Yet we must not grow impatient. The delay, the suspense, the anxiety, is sometimes the very thing which is most for our good; the trial which was required in order that our patience might have its perfect work. The hope deferred, the aching heart, may be to us a consuming fire, to consume what is earthly in us; but they will also be as a purifying fire, to purify what is immortal.

And with regard to the sins by which we are grievously vexed, and from which we are longing to be set free, we must not think it strange if our deliverance does not take place at once. In most cases, perhaps in all cases, slow and gradual is the progress by which the victory is gained over the enemies of our salvation. Indeed, we can hardly say that in this life the victory is ever finally gained before we die. We live in a perpetual warfare. But though the attacks of temptation are incessantly renewed, yet if we have put on the armour of God, the shield of faith, the helmet of truth, and the sword of the spirit, we shall not fail in the end to subdue our enemies. They will return upon us often and often, but with slackened strength, and after longer intervals, till at last they return no more. I say this, of course, on the supposition that we do all in our power to co-operate with the Spirit of God, whose assistance

we ask for this purpose. For it will be of little use to be sorry for our sins, and to pray against them, if we do nothing for our part to shun them, to resist them, to cast them out. And if after all we do not get quit of our sins, if they cleave to us closely like our skin, let us not repine against God, nor doubt His promises, but let us look narrowly into our own hearts, and search out what wickedness is lurking there, what deceitfulness, what hypocrisy, which makes the grace of God in us to be of none effect. We shall find, that instead of having done our best to cast out our sins, we have all the while been harbouring them and doating on them. We have never prayed with our whole heart, never struggled as if we were in earnest, never fought as if our all were depending on the issue of the contest.

He who labours diligently to make his calling and election sure, will lead a life not free from sorrow and trouble, not free from momentary doubts and perplexities. But he will lead a life which abounds much more in joy than in tribulation, which is much more full of hopes than fears; a life in which the storms which rage about him are as nothing, in comparison of the sunshine which is within him. It may be said of him as the great Apostle said of himself,\* that he is "troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; al-

\* 2 Cor. iv. 8.

ways bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in his body." May it be the constant endeavour of every one of us, so to bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus while we are here, that hereafter the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies !



## LECTURE III.

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### THE HEALING OF THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN.

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MARK VII. 37.—“*He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.*”

THE Apostle tells us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Christ took upon himself our flesh and blood, in order that *through* death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.\* It was through death that he was to gain that great victory, through his death on the cross—through his death, not through his life and ministry. His life and ministry were preparatory to the final conflict, just as an army may have to go through a long and harassing march before arriving at the battle-field where they are to meet the enemy. By his life and ministry he fulfilled some part of the work which the Father had given him to do. He was the great teacher, instructing us both by

\* Heb. ii. 14.

his doctrine and his example how we ought to live, that we may please God ; and sometimes, as for instance in the wilderness, he was exposed especially to the temptations of Satan, to show us how we ought to resist temptation. On these occasions he defeated, he baffled the tempter, but he did not destroy his power ; he did not give mankind in general the means of escaping from the power and the slavery of Satan. He enabled us to do this by passing *through* death ; by dying and then rising again. And therefore we are not to consider that when he went about healing all manner of diseases, and even in some few cases raising the dead to life, he was then carrying on his conflict with death and him who had the power of death. Though he brought health and soundness to great multitudes of the sick and afflicted, still this was but a local and a temporary display of his power—it was confined to comparatively a small corner of the earth, and to the narrow span of his three years' ministry ; or at the utmost, if we include the miracles wrought by his Disciples, the time during which these extraordinary signs were manifested was no more than one generation of men.

And this ministry of healing was confined chiefly to the bodily infirmities of men. In one or two cases, our Lord pronounced the blessed words, "Thy sins are forgiven" ;\* but in general the blessings which he conferred were temporal

\* See Matt. ix. 2 : Luke vii. 48.



blessings, such as feeding the hungry, curing the sick, and delivering those whose bodies and minds too were possessed by devils—a terrible kind of affliction, of which we happily know nothing now; but in its effects it must have resembled what we see in certain cases of insanity. And though when he was casting out devils he was driving away the agents and ministers of Satan, even then he was but making them flee from his presence. They knew who he was, and confessed him to be Jesus the Son of the living God. They asked whether he was come to torment them before the appointed time.\* But he did not do this—he let them go, and they departed. He did not at that time destroy the powers of Satan, but discomfited them here and there, and delivered from them some few of those who were afflicted by them. And so in every case in which he put forth his almighty power for the good of men, though undoubtedly he had purposes of love and mercy to the individuals whom he relieved, yet his main object was to prove his authority, to gain credit for the doctrine which he taught; by means of the things that were seen to establish the truth of the things unseen, to convince us that as at his word the sick of the palsy took up his bed and walked, so also at his word the sins of men should be forgiven—that power was given to him for one purpose as much as for the other—

\* Matt. viii. 29.

that he was able to save both body and soul together.

The miracle to which the words of my text refer, was wrought very soon after that which I spoke of last Sunday, *i. e.*, immediately after the return of Jesus from the borders of Tyre and Sidon to the country in which he spent so large a part of his time, the neighbourhood of the Sea of Galilee. A man was brought to him who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, his deafness probably being the cause that his speech was imperfect; and the Saviour was asked to put his hand upon him, and heal him. Our Lord did not now wait, as he had done in his last miracle until the request should be repeated, He made no delay nor demur to it; but his manner of granting it is worthy of our notice. He took the man aside out of the way of the multitude, and when he was alone with him, he put his fingers into his ears, so as to restore the organ of hearing, and spit and touched his tongue, so as to amend his lagging utterance; and then he looked up to heaven, and sighed, and said to him, Ephphatha, which means in the Hebrew tongue, "be opened." And immediately the hearing was opened, and the string of the tongue was loosed, and he spake out plainly.

Now, the first thing which we should observe here is, that our Lord varied very much his method of healing the afflicted persons who sought help of him. Sometimes he cured them without

seeing them, as when he sent the nobleman away with these comfortable words, "Go thy way, thy son liveth."\* Sometimes he merely spoke a word to the sick and they were made whole, as when he said to the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."† At other times he touched them, as when the leper said to him, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou can'st make me clean;" and Jesus touched him, and said, "I will, be thou clean."‡ Or he resorted to some other outward means of accomplishing his purpose, as in the present case, when he thrust his fingers into the deaf man's ears, and spit and touched his tongue; or again, when he made clay and anointed with it the eyes of the blind man, and thus restored him to sight.§ It was not that there was any natural virtue in the particular method which he adopted in each case. He was not like an earthly physician, treating one set of disorders with one remedy, and another with a different one.

Though in healing a leper he used certain words, and accompanied those words with the act of touch, yet at another time, when the ten lepers cried to him standing afar off, he neither touched them, nor pronounced any healing words, but simply said, "Go show yourselves to the priests," and when they had left him to obey his com-

\* John iv. 50.

† John v. 8.

‡ Matt. viii. 2.

§ John ix. 6.

mands, when they were no longer in his presence, they were healed.\*

Though on one occasion he made a clay to anoint the eyes of a blind man, yet, at another time we read of his healing the two blind men who sat by the way side, and this he did, by simply touching their eyes.†

That he had a reason for the difference which he made in each particular case we may well believe. But that reason is not revealed to us. Only this we may suppose, that as it does not appear to have had any thing to do with the bodily condition of the sufferers, it may probably have been connected with their inward feelings, with their spiritual state. And at any rate we may see that the diversity which appears in those extraordinary displays of his mercy, is quite in keeping with what happens now, in the ordinary course of God's providence.

We are afflicted in different ways; innumerable are the sorrows of men; and we are also comforted in different ways. There is not that uniformity in God's dealings with us, which we short-sighted mortals might perhaps expect. Doubtless all is regulated upon a great plan, and according to certain general laws which are unchangeable and invariable; but the scheme by which God governs the world is too vast to be comprehended by us, it is mysterious, hidden from our ken. It may commonly be observed,

\* Luke xvii. 14.

† Matt. xx. 34.

that if the same trouble or trial happens to two different persons, they find comfort under it in different ways ; the balsam which heals the wound in one case, would perhaps aggravate it in the other. There are so many nice and subtle differences in our feelings, and in the constitution of our minds, which only He who made us can fully discern ; and according to them, He distributes the gifts of His providence, and the consolations of His grace.

Even when we are most alike in our outward circumstances, He sees how unlike we are inwardly in our hearts ; somewhat perhaps, as the earthly parent perceives, that underneath the outward resemblances of form and feature, which all his children have, and which every casual observer could notice in them, there exists some great diversity of temper and disposition, which marks them out and distinguishes them widely from each other, requiring on his part a difference of treatment, so that he has to pursue a different sort of discipline with each, to make a distinction in his chastisements, and perhaps even in his endearments.

But though we cannot enter into all the reasons which led the Saviour to convey his healing power by such various channels, in the present case there are one or two peculiarities from which we may gather instruction. We read that Jesus began by taking the deaf and dumb man aside from the multitude. It may seem strange that

he should have done this, seeing that he was quite as able to work the miracle in the midst of a crowd, as in the most retired solitude. At other times, the presence of a great number of witnesses was no hindrance to him. And as his mighty works were intended to be proofs of his authority, it might seem most suitable that he should on this, as on so many other occasions, make his light so to shine before men, that they might see his work of love, and be more ready to glorify God on account of it. He took the man aside, as we may well believe, in order that being alone with him, removed from the noise and bustle of the crowd, in a silent and quiet place, he might breathe some heavenly influence into his heart, and impress his mind more deeply with a sense of the divine goodness which was shown towards him. The boisterous exclamations of the multitude, however hearty and honest, might have distracted the feelings, and interfered with that thoughtful spirit, that religious frame of mind, in which joy and fear are almost equally blended together, and in which the signal deliverances of God ought always to be received by us.

But when that deaf and dumb man was alone with Christ, in the presence of his Saviour, and of no one else—when the finger of that Saviour was thrust into his ear, and laid upon his tongue, surely something took place within him beside the restoration of the bodily organs of hearing and speech. Surely, not the ears only, but the

understanding also was opened ; not the tongue alone, but the heart, was touched. His soul, as well as his body, felt the healing virtue which went forth from the divine physician. He acquired a more intimate and personal knowledge of the Saviour, felt a more entire and implicit faith in him, conceived for him a more lively affection, a deeper and more lasting gratitude, than if the same thing had been done to him on a sudden, amid the tumultuous applause of the admiring multitude. The noise and din of the crowd would have rushed in, and filled his ears when they were opened, and would have choked his utterance when he tried to use the newly recovered power of speech in thanking his benefactor ; and perhaps he would have gone his way, and speedily forgotten the hand that had touched him, and the voice that had said, Ephphatha, be opened.

And does not the Saviour deal with us sometimes as he treated the deaf and dumb man ? when he would do us good, when he would remove the impediments which stand in the way of our salvation, when he would open within us a fresh well-spring of faith and love ; he sometimes take us aside from the multitude. He lays us upon the bed of sickness, or he shuts us up in the house of mourning, or in some other way he puts the world at a distance from us, and brings us closer to himself. And so when he has us alone with him, he makes his presence to be more especially felt by us.



The still small voice, which is drowned in the turmoil of the world, is heard by us there. We cannot choose but listen to those loving and gentle persuasions of his, to which we used to turn a deaf ear before. The bonds of our sins which held us so fast, are loosened, and it is no longer so difficult to slip them off. The love of earthly things, that fever of our souls, is subdued. We become more ready to do his will, for we now see clearly that he is the best guide we can have. We are resigned to suffer, for we look to him for our example; we are prepared to die, for we know he has passed through death before us, and destroyed him who had the power of death. Therefore, my Brethren, if at any time you are thus taken aside and parted from the world, instead of repining at the interruption which defeats your earthly plans, and puts a stop to what you consider an useful and honorable career, instead of lamenting that you can no longer discharge the duties which you have been discharging, as you think, with so much credit to yourself and advantage to others, be confident that this is ordered for a good and merciful purpose; and dispose yourselves to derive from your retirement the benefit which it was calculated to afford. The very thing by which you are sore let and hindered in running the race of this world, is most likely well adapted to help you forward in your journey to Heaven. As regards worldly affairs you may be standing

still ; but what of that, if you are drawing more near to God and Christ ?

And as we are told to judge ourselves, that we may not be judged by the Lord, let me counsel you sometimes of your own accord to go aside, and leave the world behind you for awhile, and seek to be alone with Christ. Consider if there be any grace of God in you, and pray earnestly for an increase of that grace ; ponder his word, and see if your conduct agrees therewith. And if you see your faults, do not slur them over ; do not compare with them the faults of other men, so as to draw a conclusion favourable to yourselves : do not seek to drive away the unpleasant remembrances which they occasion you, but humble yourselves before God on their account with much self-reproach, and pray Him to raise you, and to keep you from falling again.

Above all, I would speak to you who are young, just now entering on the open and treacherous sea of this busy world, just becoming your own masters, free to do what you like, disposed to revel in your freedom, and to make amends to yourselves for all the restraints in which you have hitherto been kept—let me speak to you affectionately and earnestly, as one who has known, and known too well, the dangers by which you are surrounded. Let me beg of you, however you may be beset with temptation, however enticed by friends, however occupied by business, still every day to put aside some time

for earnest deep reflection, and for the study of the word of God. Let not that holy Book, given to you perhaps by the tender mother or the affectionate friend who first taught you how to read it, let it not long be out of sight or out of mind—study it regularly and carefully. Take every opportunity that offers of becoming better acquainted with it, and gaining a deeper insight into the wisdom and learning which it contains; meditate upon its doctrines and its precepts, and view and review your own life and conduct by their light. When you were children, these good practices were in some degree habitual with you; or if they were not, you were not responsible for the omission. But now the responsibility rests upon yourselves—and this is a consequence of that freedom in which you delight; it devolves upon you, inasmuch as you are your own master. Man lays no compulsion on you—neither does God. It rests with you to decide whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear.

How free the human will is left by God we may see from the passage before us. When our Saviour had healed the deaf and dumb man in the manner I have described, saying “Ephphatha, be opened,” when that word had been obeyed, he gave a command to those who witnessed the miracle, charging them that they should tell no man. The reason of this prohibition we cannot now understand, and perhaps it was not explained

to those who heard it. But still, though they could not understand it, they were bound to obey it, as being laid upon them by One who had shown himself to be endowed with such divine power and authority. But what I wish to point out to you is this, that though undoubtedly Jesus gave them this command for some good reason, intending that they should obey it, and, though they were bound to obey it, yet he laid no compulsion upon them; they were free to keep it or not, and as a matter of fact, they disobeyed it; for we read that the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it, and were beyond measure astonished, saying, in the words of my text, "He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

This was no uncommon case. We read five or six times in the Gospels, that when our Lord had worked a miracle, he required the person whom he had healed not to make it known—as for instance, when he gave sight to the two blind men at Jericho, St. Matthew\* tells us, that he "straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it." But as in the present instance, the men disobeyed his word; and "when they were departed, they spread abroad his fame in all that country." Yet sometimes he gave the contrary command, as when he had cast the devil out of the demoniac in the country of the

\* Matt. ix. 30.

† Mark v. 19.

Gergesenes,† he bid the man go home to his friends, and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him. And in that case the man obeyed.

Of this we may be sure, that whether Jesus commanded men to publish his works abroad or to keep them secret, and whatever may have been his reason for the command in either case, he desired obedience; while it is equally plain that he exercised no control over the minds of men so as to compel their obedience. At the very time that he was showing his supreme authority over the powers of nature, he shewed in a signal way that he left free the human will, and would exert no compulsion over that. We do not read that he worked any one miracle to subdue the will of man—not because he could not, but because he would not. He could have done that as easily as he could have turned the stones of the wilderness into bread, at the suggestion of Satan. But this was not part of his appointed work. He left his enemies free to wreak their spite upon him, and though he helped the infirmities of his Disciples, and assisted their poor endeavours, still their obedience was a free-will offering of their own. And so it is now; and you must surely feel that it is so. He is indeed ever drawing you towards him, but not irresistibly. You are free to turn to him, or to turn away from him; and it is because you are thus free that you are responsible. But this also you will find, that if you

turn towards him in good earnest, you will be assisted to come to him. Draw near to him, and he will draw near to you, says the Apostle James\*. If there is in you any true desire to belong to him, he will kindle that desire into a strong resolve, and will lead on that resolve to its accomplishment. And so, by his help, having brought your will to be in accord with his will, being most completely subject to him, you will be most free—free from the slavery in which the world keeps all who follow it. Your judgment of what is right and wrong will not be warped by the fashion and opinions of men; what you know to be right you will feel yourself free to choose, and you will find yourself strong enough to do; and amid all the snares and seducements of the world you will walk uprightly and safely, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free.

\* See James iv. 8.



## LECTURE IV.

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### THE CURING OF THE LUNATIC CHILD.

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MARK IX. 23.—“*Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*”

THESE words were addressed to a man who brought his son to Jesus, to be cured by him of a terrible affliction. The child was *lunatic*, as St. Matthew says in his account of the miracle ;\* and he was subject to such dreadful paroxysms, that he foamed at the mouth, and gnashed with his teeth, and cast himself into the fire or into the water, as if he would destroy himself. These effects are sometimes witnessed at the present day, being produced by some forms of lunacy or epilepsy ; and when labouring under them, our poor human nature is seen in one of its most miserable aspects. But in the case related in the Gospel, it was no natural cause that was at

\* Matt. xvii. 14—18 ; see also Luke ix. 38—42.



work, but the agency of an evil spirit. He had a dumb spirit, says St. Mark—that is, a spirit which prevented him from speaking articulately ; not like the case of dumbness which we considered last Sunday, which proceeded from a natural imperfection, from the string of the tongue being too tight—and this dumb spirit, besides producing the effects which I have mentioned, was also able to excite spasms in the unhappy child, convulsing and tearing his whole frame. Our Lord at once rebuked the foul spirit, saying to him, “Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him.” “And the spirit rent him sore,” i. e., threw him into violent convulsions, “and came out of him ; and the child was as one dead ; in-somuch that many said, he is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.” At the Saviour’s touch the child recovered his strength, and “he was cured from that very hour.”

The miracle itself no doubt was only one of a thousand of the same kind, though no other exactly like it is recorded in Scripture. But it is in the circumstances which attended it, and in the sayings of our Lord to which it gave rise, that we must chiefly seek our instruction. To these therefore, let us direct our especial attention to-day. The miracle was wrought immediately after our Lord’s descent from the moun-

tain on which he had been transfigured. On that mountain, in the presence of only three of his disciples, St. Peter, St. John, and St. James, he put on for a short time His glorious majesty. His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was as white as the light. Moses and Elias also appeared talking with Him in his glory. Such a sight was almost too bright and blissful for mortal eyes; and the Disciples at one moment exclaimed with delight that it was good for them to be there, and presently, as they entered into the cloud, and heard the voice saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am pleased, hear ye him," they fell upon their faces, being sore afraid. But when they lifted up their eyes again, the glorious vision had passed away, and they saw no one save Jesus only. With him they went down from the mountain to rejoin their fellow-Disciples, whom they had left in the plain below.

And here a scene was presented to them, which must have been a mournful contrast to the wonders of the Transfiguration. They had just been, as it were, behind the veil, and had beheld somewhat of the brightness and blessedness of heaven. The glory of the Lord had passed before them, attended by His holy prophets. But here they saw human nature, encompassed with infirmity, suffering in body, faint in spirit; frail, erring, unstable man. They found their fellow

Disciples in the midst of a great multitude, some of whom, the Scribes; the doctors of the law, were questioning with them. And what was the subject of this contention? The afflicted child, of whom we have spoken, had been brought to these Disciples, that they might cure him. They tried, but "could not." Though they had been gifted by their Master with miraculous powers, and on other occasions had exercised those powers with so much success, that they came back to him full of joy, and told him that even the devils were subject to them; yet now they had no power over the unclean spirit. Why was this? The Scribes, no doubt, were pressing this question home to them with taunts and jeers, rejoicing at their discomfiture. And the Disciples themselves, when they were alone with Jesus in the house, asked him privately, (ver. 28) "Why could not we cast him out?" And he told them, as St. Matthew relates,\* that it was because of their unbelief.

Such was the view which met the eyes of those who just before had been rapt into the heaven of heavens. There was the miserable child, the victim of an evil spirit, writhing in horrible convulsions; and there were the Disciples of Jesus scarcely less to be pitied; for in his absence their faith being put to the proof had failed, and they were hemmed in by a multitude and exposed to the jibes of the Scribes and Pharisees. Had they

\* Matt. xvii. 20.

not been endangering their Master's cause by their faintness of heart? causing the faith of some to waver, and giving occasion for the adversary to blaspheme? We are reminded of what happened when Moses went up to Mount Sinai, that while he was absent from the people, and admitted into the very presence of God, the people below fell away from their faith; and when he went back to them, he found them sacrificing to a golden calf, even Aaron himself, the priest of the Lord, having complied with their idolatry.\* We are reminded also of another truth, which comes much nearer home to ourselves, and lies within the compass of our own experience. If we have been accustomed to look up to some earthly friend, if we have been guided by the maxims of his wisdom, and have learned to rely upon his teaching, to follow his example, to obey his word; and if it so happens that we are separated from that friend, so that his eye is no longer upon us, and his precepts no longer resound in our ears; are we not very liable in his absence to relax, to deviate from the good path which we were treading, to have a less lively remembrance of his good advice, or if we remember it, to have a less implicit reliance upon it? Do we not almost unconsciously grow lukewarm in our desire to do what he taught us? Is not our heart less strongly in-

\* Exod. xxxii. 1.

fluenced by his good counsels, even as our memory is less vividly impressed with the lineaments of his countenance? And still more, while our Heavenly Lord is gone up to the place of his glory, the holy mountain which is on high, to be with his Heavenly Father, and while we, his disciples, are waiting for him here below, left to wrestle with his enemies, and to maintain his cause in his absence, is not our faith terribly cold and faint? Do we trust him, love him, seek to do his will, with half the fervour, with half the devotion which we should have, if he were now walking and talking with us, and if we had his example and authority visibly set before us?

If we would know how very far we are from having a right faith, a perfect, all-sufficient, world-conquering faith, we have only to imagine what we should be, supposing Christ were now present to us in the flesh, and then to reflect upon what we are—how ready should we be, if he were with us, to follow him, to put our whole trust in him, to be under his sovereign guidance in all things, instead of giving him, as we now do, a partial, wavering confidence; half leaning upon him, and half trusting in ourselves; by turns seeking him and avoiding him; failing in so many of our resolutions and endeavours to serve him; failing, as the Disciples failed, because of our unbelief. Between what we are and

what we should be, if Christ were among us, how great is the difference! far greater than it ought to be, considering that he *is* with us, not visibly present indeed, but dwelling in us by his Holy Spirit. "I will not leave you comfortless," he said, "I will come unto you." The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."\*

That promised Comforter came and has remained ever since, to enlighten, and guide, and cheer the faithful disciple of Christ. And having Him, we cannot plead the pitiful excuse of which we might otherwise avail ourselves, that it is only according to human nature to be unsteady and wavering in our attachment to a Master who has gone away, and left us to ourselves. Such a plea will not serve us now, not even so much as it might have served those Disciples whom, as we have seen, he did leave for a short time quite alone and unfriended, when we went up into the mountain to be transfigured.

To those Disciples and the multitude around them, let us now for a moment return. The day was manifestly going against those Disciples. They had made an attempt to work a miracle, and had failed. The Scribes were pressing them hard with their questions, just as if an army

\* John xiv. 18, 26.

which had made an unsuccessful onset, were in turn attacked by its opponents. But in this conjuncture, the arrival of the Saviour altogether changed the scene, and put an end to the conflict that was going on. To him all eyes were turned; and we read that all the people when they beheld him “were greatly amazed.”\* This expression, that they were greatly amazed, seems to show that there was something unusual in his appearance; and it has led to the supposition that he still bore about him some remains of that wondrous light with which he had shone during his Transfiguration—just as the face of Moses is said to have shone when he came down from Mount Sinai, and appeared among the children of Israel.† But however that may be, the people all ran towards Jesus and saluted him. The father of the unhappy child at once appealed to him to give that aid which the Disciples had been unable to give. But we may well suppose that the failure of the Disciples tended rather to shake his faith in the power of the Master, and that he did not speak to him with the confidence which he would otherwise have used. He addresses him somewhat doubtfully, saying: “*If* thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” “If thou canst.” Our Lord answered that *if* by another *if*, “if thou canst believe;” so as to show that his being able to help depended on their being

\* Mark, ix. 15.

† Exodus, xxxiv., 35.



able to believe. And hearing that not only the man himself, but his own Disciples also were faint-hearted, he declares in the strongest and most unqualified terms, the omnipotence of faith; "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." To this the man made answer in a way which proved that though he was greatly encouraged by the saying of Our Lord, he did not feel that faith was yet supreme in his heart, he was still encumbered with doubts from which he would fain be set free. "Lord," he said, "I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." He did well to confess both his faith and his unbelief. Boldly to declare our convictions is the way to have them strengthened and deepened—humbly to confess our doubts, coupling with the confession a hearty desire to be free from them, is the way to have them removed. The Saviour received his faith, imperfect as it was, and presently ended all his doubts by curing his afflicted child.

Now, having gone through the principal circumstances of this miracle, if we inquire what doctrine is interwoven with it, we see at once that it conveys a striking lesson as to the paramount importance and power of Faith. It shews by the example of the Disciples, how men fail in their Christian life from the weakness of their Faith. It shews by the word of Our Lord, what a man may do who has a perfect Faith, that all things are possible to him. It shows us also by

the example of the unhappy father, what a struggle is often going on in the minds of men between Faith and unbelief, and how that struggle may best be brought to a successful issue, namely, by honest confession and earnest prayer. In short, the great Christian principle of Faith which pervades the whole of God's Revelation, and without which no real religion of any kind can subsist, is set forth and illustrated in this miracle in more ways than one. We read what we may do if we have it, how we are undone if we have it not, and how we must strive in order that we may obtain a larger measure of it than we have.

But will you say that this subject of Faith has been worn threadbare by the Christian preacher; that for your part you are tired of hearing of it; that your Faith is as bright, as steady, and as sincere as it need be; and that the necessity of Faith is a thing to be inculcated chiefly upon the heathen, or upon those who are still babes in Christ? I think no one will talk in this way, who knows what Faith is, and who is acquainted with his own heart, and has learnt by experience how liable he is to grow dull and lukewarm, even if he does not fall into doubt and uncertainty. There is many a man who thinks he has Faith, and yet is as devoid of that great principle as the poor heathen or the unborn babe. He believes perhaps; his reason is convinced, but his heart is not touched, his motives, his actions are not influenced; and

if he is not like the devils who believe and tremble, his belief is no more a living Faith than the fire in the flint is a living flame; it is not so much, for the flint when struck by the steel will yield a hasty spark, though it straight grow cold again; but his heart though smitten by the trials and temptations of life will yield no spark at all of Christian faith, or hope, or love. It is needful that I should be often taking opportunities, my brethren, of setting before you this great principle, and representing it to you in its true light, and impressing upon you that if you have it, it will be, it must be, it cannot help being a source of spiritual life and warmth within you, and that if you have it in all its fulness, you will be equal to every duty, and sufficient for every trial that can befall you.

Even if the miracle which I have undertaken to expound to-day, did not require me to speak of Faith, I should probably be led to speak of it by the events of the week which has just closed. We may well illustrate the nature and importance of Faith in matters of religion, by observing what effect the same principle has in the affairs of this world. Remarkable examples have just now been presented to us, both of its power when it is present, and of the mischief arising from the absence of it.\* We have heard with thank-

\* A few days before the delivery of this Lecture, intelligence had been received of the capture of Delhi

fulness of the glorious successes, which by the Divine blessing have crowned the efforts of our armies, and removed a great portion of our anxieties. The rebellious city has fallen, the beleaguered garrison has been relieved. The bravest of the brave have shed their blood; but our women and children have been saved. The cost has been great and grievous, but the victories have been worthy of the cost. And when we turn from these glorious results, to consider the means by which they were achieved, it strikes us at once that an army, of whatever materials it is made, and however well found and appointed it may be, would be of no avail if it were not held together and animated by the great principle of mutual faith and reliance. The General has confidence in his men, and the men in their General, and every man has faith in his comrades, that they will stand side by side with him, that they like himself are ready to do or die. Inspired by this principle, the living mass moves onward, solid and compact, as if one mind and one will were impelling the whole. But they are strong only when they are united, and they are united only so long as they have trust in each other; and if in the deadly breach, in the midst of

by our troops, and of the timely succour brought to the garrison of Lucknow by General Havelock. During the week, a commercial crisis had taken place at home, which was attended with extensive panic and disaster.

the conflict, this mutual confidence is lost or impaired, they all begin to waver: and if each loses his trust in his neighbour, and begins to think of himself only, and to care for his own safety, then a panic is likely to ensue, and irretrievable disaster is the consequence.

And of the consequences which follow from the loss of this mutual confidence between man and man, we have a notable instance in this very week at home. A season of commercial pressure has arisen, which under any circumstances would be hard to bear; but it has been aggravated by that wide-spreading distrust which, in such seasons, is too commonly engendered. Men lose all confidence in their fellow-men, and, instead of leaving their wealth to flow in its accustomed channels, they suddenly withdraw it and hoard it at home; and thus, while guarding themselves against an imaginary evil, they inflict a real one upon others. In this way a panic has spread in some parts of the country; and it is to be feared that the mischief has not been arrested until it has produced consequences by which a large portion of the population will be distressed throughout the winter.

I mention these things because we could not have better examples to show the great influence which the principle of Faith possesses in the concerns of this life, exercising irresistible power when it is present in all its strength, while the sudden

interruption or loss of it is attended by disastrous consequences. And turning now, with these events fresh in our minds, to spiritual things, we feel no surprise, we count it no exaggeration, when we hear the Apostle St. John saying, "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith;" \* and when we read the words with which, according to St. Matthew, our Lord followed up his rebuke to the Disciples after he had worked this miracle, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Faith may be said to remove the mountains, because it enables us resolutely to climb them, and easily to surmount them. Thus it removes the obstacles and hindrances which meet us on our path to heaven. It lifts up the valleys, and makes the rough places plain before us. It makes us to be true children of Abraham, never losing sight of God's promises, though they seem ever so far from their fulfilment, and always ready to offer up our dearest treasures to God, when He requires them of us. It makes us able to go through the Red Sea of trial and danger, as if it were dry land. It enables every one of us like David to slay our Goliath, the spiritual giant that assaults and hurts our soul, the particular sin that does most

\* John v. 4.

easily visit us; for in such spiritual conflicts, fighting not against flesh and blood, Faith teaches us to trust not in the weapons of carnal warfare, not in our own perverted understanding, but in the arm of the Lord, in the grace and guidance of His Spirit. What great spiritual victories have been won by the strength of Faith, how the strongholds of Satan, like the walls of Jericho, have been made to fall down before it, when they have been compassed seven days, when the attack on them has been persevered in, and renewed again and again, the revelations of the last day will make known.

But I would hope, my brethren, that you are not without experience of these things, and that though your Faith is far from being so steady, so burning and intense as it should be, and as you wish it to be, yet it has done something for you, and enabled you to see what great things you might accomplish, if you had it more abundantly. I believe it is only those who have Faith who feel the want of it. They who have it not, know not what a real help and stay it is, and so they have no desire for it. Take it as a good sign if you have a yearning after it, if you find yourself saying in the same breath, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. Remember that even the Apostles of Christ had good need to cry, "Lord, increase our faith."\* Let this prayer

\* Luke xvii. 5.



be offered up by you, not as a mere form of words, but in all earnestness, as the deep utterance of the heart, and it will not be offered in vain. It is a prayer in which we all may join, though we are all sinners, and in which we should all do well to join, even if we were all saints. May God teach us to use the prayer aright, and may He receive it, and enable you and me, my brethren, to see more clearly than we now do, the things which concern our peace ; may He teach us to seek the salvation which Christ has purchased for us, and to rely only upon that ; may He wean us from the love of the things seen, which are temporal, and strengthen in us the longing desire for the things unseen, which are eternal ; may He give us grace to bear our troubles patiently and with good hope, though we cannot see the end of them ; to keep our good resolutions steadily, even if we cannot at present see the fruit of them ; and to lay up our hearts in that treasure-house above, which at present we can see only by the eye of Faith.



## LECTURE V.

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### THE CLEANSING OF THE TEN LEPERS.

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LUKE XVII. 17.—*Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?*

THE ten who are here mentioned, are the ten lepers who were cleansed by Jesus when he was passing through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem.

The disease of leprosy is one of which happily we know nothing, except by hearsay. At the present day, it is not to be found among us; though a few hundred years ago it was not uncommon even in this country, insomuch that hospitals were founded for the benefit of poor persons afflicted with it. Like the plague, and like other scourges which God sends from time to time and takes away again when they have fulfilled his wise purposes, the disease of leprosy would be altogether forgotten out of mind, if we did not often read of it in Holy Scripture. It pre-

veiled very much among the Jews, and a terrible and loathsome complaint it appears to have been. And what was still more distressing than the bodily suffering which attended it, it had the effect of shutting out those who were afflicted with it from the society of their fellow-creatures. For by the law of Moses, a leper was regarded as a person in a state of pollution. It seems to have been not merely a sanitary precaution, that he was to be avoided because he was suffering from a contagious disease, but he was put under a sort of religious ban or excommunication, and it was forbidden to go near him or to touch him ; so that instead of receiving help and sympathy in his affliction, he was driven out and obliged to live in solitude, unless he could find other persons in the same miserable situation with himself, who might be his companions in distress.

Such was the case, it seems, with the men in the chapter before us. Being outcasts from the rest of mankind, they had herded together for the sake of companionship. And though we are told that the Jews had in general no dealings with the Samaritans, yet we find that one of the ten was a Samaritan. He had been admitted into this wretched brotherhood for the sake of his affliction, and all enmity and jealousy towards him was forgotten. For so it is, that when men are in deep misery, they care little with whom they associate ; sorrow is a great leveller, it makes

social distinctions and national jealousies to be forgotten, and causes friendship to spring up between those who would at other times stand aloof from each other. These ten men therefore wandered about together, keeping at a distance from the dwellings of men, the objects of horror to all who saw them; no one daring to go near them, or to offer them any kindness or assistance, for fear of becoming polluted by their foul disease. For so it was written in the law of Moses, "The clothes of the leper shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, unclean! unclean! All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled. He is unclean—he shall dwell alone." \* Accordingly, when these men saw Jesus approaching them, they did not go to meet him and throw themselves at his feet, as so many other poor creatures did, who came to be healed by him; but they stood afar off, as we are told, and from a distance they lifted up their voices, and cried aloud to him, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

But Jesus ever hears those who cry to him from afar off, as well as those who are near. He saw the faith of these men, and knew what was their disease; and so he said to them at once, "Go, shew yourselves to the priests." This was telling them to act as if their leprosy were removed, while it was still cleaving to them as close as ever.

\* Levit. xiii. 45.

For when a leper was healed of his disease, the Jewish law required that he should go to the Temple, and see the priests, and go through certain ceremonies, such as washing, and shaving the hair, and offering two small birds, one of which was killed, and the other was let to go loose into the open field.\* And so on another occasion, when our Lord healed a man of his leprosy, he said to him, "Go and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." These ten men therefore gave a strong proof of their faith, by at once obeying the word of our Lord; and before the leprosy had departed, they were on their way to the priests, not doubting that it would be done unto them as they desired. And as they went, we are told, they were cleansed. Their loathsome disease forsook them, and they became at once sound and clean like other men.

What a joy it must have been to find themselves suddenly relieved from their dreadful scourge. No one perhaps fully values the blessing of health except those who have lost it for a season; and if any persons have reason to be thankful to God, it would surely be those who are suddenly delivered from a disease which seemed hopeless and incurable. These men had been commanded to go and shew themselves to the priests, and it was quite right that they

\* Levit. xiv. 1.

should do so ; but it was to be expected that when they found they were healed, their first impulse would be to turn back for a moment and thank their wonderful benefactor, before they continued their journey. Instead of doing this, the nine Jews went on their way as if they had forgotten him, to whom they were indebted for the restoration of their health. Like the rest of their countrymen, they were intent upon keeping the letter of the law, but neglected its spirit ; they were ready to make their offering in the Temple because they had been commanded to do so, and because the law required it ; but they were not properly thankful to the Author and Giver of the great blessing which they had received.

The Samaritan however, was no sooner healed than he separated himself from his Jewish companions ; the bond that had united him to them, the community of suffering, was broken ; he began to think and act for himself. It was perhaps well for him at this moment that he was a Samaritan ; for being of a different race from the other nine, belonging to a people who were not friendly to the Jews, he was the less disposed to follow the leading of his Jewish companions. He turned back, and did what all ought to have done after such a miraculous deliverance. As he had just before lifted up his voice to cry for mercy, so now he lifted it up

in praise and thanksgiving. For we read that with a loud voice he glorified God, and fell down at the feet of Jesus, giving him thanks. Then answered Jesus, and said: "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger;" and then he spoke a few gracious words to the man, saying: "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." His faith had made him whole; for without faith on his part, the infinite love of the Saviour would not have been extended to him, nor his Almighty power put forth to deliver him. The man's faith was an indispensable condition to the working of the miracle. Thus did the Saviour pass over what he had done himself, and dwell rather on that small but necessary part which the poor leper himself had borne in this wonderful cure—an example surely to human benefactors, that they should keep their good deeds in the shade, and make much of any circumstance which may seem to give those whom they assist a claim on their benevolence.

And if the speech of the Saviour was an example to those who confer benefits, the conduct of the man whom he healed is an example in a different way to us all. Instead of agreeing with the nine to do what was wrong, he had the courage to think and act for himself, and to do what his own heart and feelings told him was right



to be done. I say he had the courage to act thus ; for it does require courage, when you see those who are about you doing what you disapprove, suddenly to separate yourselves from them, to stand alone, and to take your own course, at the risk of forfeiting their good opinion and losing their friendship, perhaps also of incurring their ridicule. We are all more or less liable to be led by others and it is very hard for us to differ from friends with whom we have long acted, taking council with them day by day, and living with them on terms of mutual confidence and intimacy. But we must never surrender to them the keeping of our conscience, nor suffer them to decide for us what is right and wrong for us to do. And if we see them taking a course which our conscience disapproves, it becomes our duty, and a very painful duty it sometimes is, to separate ourselves from them, and to act upon our own better judgment. It is far safer to stand alone in doing what we know to be right, than to follow the multitude in doing what we believe to be evil. A man's resolution is sorely tried, when he sees his friends doing amiss, and feels that he must break off from them. But this man had the courage to do it ; and he had his reward, as every one will have who follows his example. For no one ever yet repented of doing what he verily in his heart believed to be right, whatever sacrifice of friends and worldly convenience it may have cost him.

But it is very easy to see that the principal lesson which is taught us in this miracle—for you will remember that in these discourses I am viewing the miracles of our Lord as one of the channels by which instruction of a practical kind has been conveyed to us—the main lesson taught by this miracle is the duty of being thankful for the blessings which we have received from God.

And suppose the question is asked: if you had been of the number of the ten lepers, and had been healed of your disease, would you have gone away with the nine, or would you have turned back with the remaining one, to give thanks and glory to God? Your answer will doubtless be, that you hope you would have done as the Samaritan did. But what ground have you for thinking so? Looking, I mean, to your past lives and your experience of yourselves, have you reason to be sure that you would have had the good feeling which he had, and also the courage to give expression to that feeling? You have never been placed in circumstances exactly similar to his. But you have had your deliverances nevertheless. You have had a grievous sickness, which, by God's mercy, has been removed. You have been in some great danger, from which you have been saved in what you called at the time a providential manner. You have been afflicted with poverty and distress, from which you have been unexpectedly relieved

by a sudden turn of good fortune, or by Christian charity, or by some other of God's instruments or agents. You have had what was worse, some great trouble of mind, cankering as it were your heart, and consuming your spirits; and from that you have escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare has been broken by God's goodness, and you have been delivered from your trouble.

In one of these ways, or in some other way, for numberless are the trials to which our nature is subject, you must have experienced more than once in your life the special kindness and interposition of the Almighty in your behalf. You have known what it is to enjoy bodily health and strength after pain and sickness, or to have rest after labour, or bread to eat after long fasting and privation, or safety after danger, or peaceful assurance after anxious doubt. You have known the trouble that endureth for the night, and the joy that cometh in the morning. Then have you been duly thankful for the mercies you have received? Did they make any strong impression on your mind, and lead you to look up to Him from whom all good things do come; or did you go your way, and forget your deliverance, almost as soon as it had happened? Is gratitude for blessings received in your case an empty name, a thing to promise before the blessings come, but not requiring to be fulfilled when they are

come? Perhaps you cried to the Lord in your trouble, and He delivered you out of your distress; but did you remember to praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men? Did you offer to Him the sacrifice of thankfulness, and tell out his works with gladness? Nay more, can you trace to that time of refreshment and deliverance any alteration for the better in your manner of living? Can you say that from that time forward you lived more as if you were under God's eye, thought more of your Almighty friend, relied more on His goodness, laboured more earnestly to please Him, and felt more sorrow when you disobeyed Him?

Perhaps you will say that you remember to have felt very thankful to God for the mercies which he vouchsafed to you; you gave the glory to Him. You fell on your knees, like the Samaritan, you poured out your heart in thanksgiving. I trust, my brethren, that you did this. But this is more than some persons do; for as soon as they are out of their trouble they go their way, and remember no more that they have ever been in distress; and it never enters into their thoughts to express any gratitude either to God or man for their deliverance. But it is not enough to say a prayer or two, and to have a feeling of gratitude for a little while, and then to let the matter pass from your minds. True thankfulness

is something more than this. It is a lasting remembrance of benefits received, a frequent reflecting upon them, an abiding sense of God's goodness : and it shows itself forth in actions, as well as in words. The leper turned back, and fell at Jesus' feet, and thanked him. But I should say that he was after all a thankless sort of person, and only a shade better than the other nine, if he went away, and returned to his old sins, and thought no more of Jesus, and never inquired about his doctrines : in short, if he did not become the humble disciple, the faithful follower of Christ. I think he ought, if he possibly could, to have followed him from that day forth, even to the foot of the cross. We are to give thanks not only with our lips but with our lives ; otherwise our lip-service is a mockery by which we deceive ourselves, but cannot deceive God. If we have received any special mercy from God — and who has not ? — we shall show forth our gratitude by endeavouring to keep His commandments more steadily than we have done in time past ; maintaining stricter watch over ourselves, that we may be more pure and innocent in our conversation, more thoroughly honest in our dealings both in little matters and in great, more sober in our enjoyments, more careful over our tempers, less fond of this world, more hopeful as to the next.

I have been speaking now of worldly deliver-

ances, such as happen in the common course of God's providence, one to this man, and another to that; and I say that these mercies ought to raise in us a spirit of strong and lasting thankfulness, enduring long after the occasion which calls it forth. But there is a deliverance far greater than all these, and it is one which has been granted to us all. All have received it, at least it has been placed within reach of all, and it is simply our own fault if we have not profited by it. We are all by nature infected with sin, that leprosy of the soul as it is sometimes called, by reason of which we are outcasts from God, just as the Jewish lepers were outcasts from the society of men. But we are brought near to God by the death of Christ. We are washed and made clean by his blood. God is indeed of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and we were shapen in iniquity, as the Psalmist says, and inherited sinfulness from our very birth. But our iniquity has been put away from us, and our sins are blotted out from remembrance; we are able to call upon God as our Father and our Friend. This has been done for us. This deliverance from sin and death, this restoration to the love of our almighty and heavenly Father has been accomplished for us by that same Jesus, who healed the ten men of their leprosy. And so we are no longer obliged to stand afar from God, we may draw near to Him with the full assurance of faith:

we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the Saints, as the Apostle says, and of the household of God.\* This infinite blessing has been procured for us all. Do we live as if we were thankful for it? Does *one in ten* of us value it, and bear it in mind as he ought? Do we remember what it is we have received? The deliverance from sin and guilt, the restoration to a state of innocence, the promise of eternal life and happiness, this is the gift—and though we do not as yet possess and enjoy it, we have received an assurance of it which cannot fail, provided we on our part do not fail in what is required of us: that is to say, provided we put our faith in the Giver of this precious gift, and study to conform ourselves to His will, and to live after His example. Do we duly reflect on this? Do we picture to ourselves the forlorn, the hopeless condition in which we should be if left to ourselves, and do we contrast it with the blessedness of the hope which we have in Christ? Do we remember that between earth and heaven there is a great gulf which of ourselves we could never pass, but which has been bridged over for us by the love of our Saviour? Do we look boldly and with a longing eye across that gulf, and often call to mind, that our home is on yonder side of it, and that we are but strangers and sojourners here below?

\* Eph. ii. 19.



I fear we must one and all confess that we do not lift up our hearts to God as we ought. Here in the congregation we may perhaps be able for a few moments to cast off worldly thoughts, and to draw near to Him who made us, in fervent prayer and thanksgiving. But the difficulty is to have Him in our minds amid the daily trials and temptations of our lives. How many a good resolution is made here on the Sunday, which is stifled by the cares and pleasures of the following day! How many a soul rises a little heavenward to-day, which will be dragged down to earth again on the morrow, and will lie grovelling in the mire of worldly concerns, till the Lord's day comes round again! All these brief revivals of the spirit are of no more account than the awakening of the sluggard, who starts and turns him on his side and folds his arms once more to slumber. And is this the thankfulness which such great benefits ought to inspire in us? Is this what is meant by religion? Shall the worship of Almighty God end in such a mockery as this? Week by week, as this day returns, there may be a fair show, a goodly promise. But where are the *fruits* of righteousness, where is the sober and godly life, where is the self-denial, which marks the disciple of him who laid down his life for men? Where is that active charity, which should make us freely give, and freely forgive, even as we have freely received, and have been

freely forgiven? Where is that strict honesty and integrity of conduct, which becomes those who are the children of truth? Where is that patience under difficulties, that firmness against temptation, that composure in trouble, that hopefulness in affliction, which the good soldier of the Cross ought ever to maintain? We cannot indeed expect to live up to the standard of perfection in all these points. Such is the infirmity of our nature, that we shall often fail in every one of them. But if we do not endeavour after these Christian graces, and persevere in our endeavours notwithstanding repeated failures, what is the worth of all our good intentions, what is our thankfulness to God-ward?

Nor is thankfulness the only motive for our exertions. God has given us other incentives, perhaps more powerful in their influence on the human heart than gratitude for favours past. Especially He tells us that these blessings which He has conferred upon us, pardon for sin, a life of eternal happiness in heaven, are not secured to us, are not made wholly ours, without some effort on our part. There is a condition attached to them, upon our fulfilment of which it depends, whether or not we shall enter into possession of the inheritance which He has prepared for us. That condition is, that we should do our utmost to live after the pattern which he has given us in His holy Word, and in the life of His blessed Son.

It is not a question therefore of gratitude only. Joined with that feeling is the desire to make our calling and election sure. We are not required to show our thankfulness by in any way sacrificing our interest. It is not one thing to do our duty to God, and another to promote our own welfare ; but it is one and the same thing. The service which God requires of us is this, that we should consult for our own happiness, our happiness in the largest sense ; having respect not to these few fleeting weeks and hours, but to the ages of eternity. He lays upon us no other yoke than this. He asks no greater sacrifice than this, that we should not live merely for the life that now is, but for that which is to come. The great end and object of our lives must be the attainment of happiness in another world ; but if we keep that end steadily in view, and continually lay up in store for those future ages, we shall be taking the best course to sweeten our lot here below.



## LECTURE VI.

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### THE HEALING OF MALCHUS'S EAR.

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MATTHEW XXVI., 52, 53.—“*Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place : for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?*”

THESE words were spoken by our Lord on the night that he was betrayed, when he healed the ear of the high priest's servant, which had been struck off by one of his own Disciples with the sword. Upon considering whether any one of his miracles more than another would be appropriate for our Advent meditations, it seemed to me that none could be more in harmony than this is with the thoughts to which the service of to-day invites us, and which are to give the tone to our religious reflections during this season. For while we contemplate the Saviour of men working this

miracle in the hour of his deepest earthly abasement, and working it for the benefit of one of those who were bent upon taking away his life, we are made sensible that the Son of God did indeed come to visit us "in great humility," and that nothing which his enemies wrought against him either by way of injury or insult, ever moved him for an instant to lay aside that humility: while at the same time, when he speaks of the legions of angels which were ready to wait upon him if he chose to ask the Father for them, we are reminded on a sudden of that glorious majesty in which he dwelt before ever the earth and the world were made, and in which he will shew himself when he comes the second time, as the Judge of quick and dead.

In order to place before you clearly the circumstances of this miracle, it will be necessary to gather up the different particulars of it which are related some by one Evangelist and some by another. There is perhaps no more striking instance of the way in which the four Gospels sometimes all relate the same event, and all in different ways; not in the slightest degree contradicting each other, but each relating only a portion of what took place, and receiving illustration from a comparison with the others; so that it is very instructive, and indeed quite necessary for the complete understanding of the matter, to compare together the accounts of it which are given by

St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John,\* and to make a harmony of all the four.

We can very well believe, that when the sacred company in the Garden of Gethsemane were set upon at dead of night by the soldiers and officers of the Jews, a great confusion and alarm was produced, so that no one could see, or if any one saw, he could not observe and remember exactly every occurrence that took place ; and thus it came to pass that the four Evangelists, giving the accounts of so many different eye-witnesses, would naturally represent the scene to us in different ways. Thus St. Mark simply tells us that when the officers laid hands upon Jesus, one of the bystanders drew a sword, and struck off the ear of the high-priest's servant, without saying that the bystander was an Apostle, and without letting us know that Jesus himself took any notice of the action. St. Matthew in his account describes this bystander rather more exactly, saying that he was one of those who were with Jesus ; and he records the rebuke which Jesus addressed to his over-zealous Disciple, part of which I have taken for my text. St. John discloses the name of the Disciple, shewing that it was no other than St. Peter, the very one of all the twelve whom we should have said was the most likely, from his eager and impulsive disposition, to have done such a deed. From St. John also we learn that the servant's name was

\* See Mark xiv. 47.—Luke xxii. 49.—John xviii. 10.

Malchus ; a circumstance with which he might have become acquainted from the personal knowledge which he tells us that he had of the high-priest himself, whose servant Malchus was. But instead of the more full discourse which, as we learn from St. Matthew, was addressed by Jesus to his Disciple, St. John has recorded only this short saying : “ Put up thy sword into the sheath ; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ? ” The cup—that cup of woe, of which, as St. Matthew tells us, he had spoken just before, when he was in his agony, “ O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.” St. John therefore builds up the story with some interesting details which neither St. Mark nor St. Matthew have mentioned.

Finally we turn to St. Luke’s Gospel, and from that we learn several additional particulars, which must by no means be overlooked. It appears from his account, that before any blow was struck, the Disciples, seeing what was likely to happen, asked Jesus if they might use their weapons in his defence : “ Lord, shall we smite with the sword.” And immediately, without waiting for an answer to the question, the impetuous Disciple who, as we have learnt from St. John, was the apostle Peter, smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And while the other Evangelists relate that which is



human in the scene, St. Luke alone records that in it which is divine. Only St. Luke relates the miracle which Jesus wrought in order to undo the deed of his Disciple. He only tells us that Jesus touched the ear, and healed it. He only has preserved to us this last miracle of the Saviour, an act of mercy to an enemy; even as he only has preserved among the Saviour's last dying words that blessed prayer which he offered for his persecutors, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do."\*

But this is not all—If we are disposed to trace the matter back to the beginning, and to inquire how it happened that any of the Disciples were armed with swords on this occasion, and how they came to be so forward in the use of those weapons, the Gospel of St. Luke may perhaps afford some answer to our inquiry. For there, in an earlier part of the same chapter (the 22nd), we find our Lord warning his Disciples, and preparing them for a season of great trial and affliction, which was about to come upon them. On a former occasion, though they were sent forth by him without purse, or scrip, or shoes, yet lacked they nothing. They met with neither hardship nor opposition. They fulfilled their mission as it seems without any untoward event, and came back to him rejoicing. But now they were about to encounter real difficulties and privations.

\* Luke, xxiii. 34.

“Now,” he says, “let him that hath a purse, take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.” Now it is plain that the Saviour, the Prince of Peace, did not intend his Disciples to take these words in their literal sense. I say this is plain, not merely because he is the Prince of Peace, but because we find that that very same evening at a later hour, when there seemed to be an opportunity for using the sword, he restrained his Disciple as we have seen, and bade him return his weapon to its sheath, and said in the words of my text, “All they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword.” No doubt he meant his words to be taken figuratively; it was the sword of the Spirit, even the Word of God, as St. Paul says, with which he intended them to provide themselves: that was the one thing needful for their Christian warfare; in comparison with that all earthly blessings were to be lightly esteemed by them, so that they should be ready to part with the very garments off their backs, the things most necessary to their bodies, for the sake of it.

It was however quite natural that the Disciples should take the saying of their Master according to its literal meaning; and they therefore shewed him how far they were already provided with weapons, saying: “Lord, behold here are two swords.” He answered them, “It is enough;” thus putting aside the subject, as one which it

was not fitting to explain more fully at that time. And immediately after that saying, he arose and went out with them to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. And it is no wonder that when they saw the multitude coming towards them with swords and staves, they supposed the time was come for them to defend their Lord with those carnal weapons of which they understood him to have spoken so recently. Peter especially would be ready to make good his over-confident declaration, "Lord, I will lay down my life for thy sake." He thought he would lay down his life for his Master, little knowing that his Master was about to lay down his life for him. And thus in the plenitude of his love and zeal, he did a deed of blood, which his heavenly Master at once redressed by the finger of his mercy, touching the wounded ear and making it whole—a miracle, not wrought like the other miracles, upon a believer, or a friend, or one who was supplicating Christ for help, but upon one who was employed against him by his enemies—the Saviour thus teaching us by the example of his last miracle, what he also taught us by his dying prayer, that we should love our enemies, and do good to them that despitefully use us and persecute us.

Thus did Christ overrule for good the misunderstanding of his Disciples, of which I have spoken, and Peter's act of violence, which followed from it. And not only did that deed of blood-

shed cause the Saviour's willing mercy to flow apace, but it also drew forth a rebuke, which was intended as a warning for every one who thinks to advance the cause of Christ by violent means. All they that take the sword for this purpose, shall perish by the sword. Their blows will recoil upon their own heads. They are taking the wrong way of serving their Master ; they are doing him a great disservice. The work which they are doing, will all have to be undone : the wounds which they are inflicting will have to be healed by the touch of Christian charity. The victory which they think they are achieving, will be turned into discomfiture and shame. " My kingdom is not of this world," said our Lord, only a few hours after he had delivered this rebuke, when he stood before Pontius Pilate, charged with endeavouring to make himself a king, " If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now is my kingdom not from hence." Great indeed is the presumption of him who would set at naught such plain declarations as these : great the folly of him who thinks he can prevail in a way in which Christ has pronounced that he shall not prevail, and has forewarned him that his endeavours shall end in his own hurt.

The warfare in which we are engaged is indeed a deadly one : but it is not a warfare against flesh and blood ; and therefore it cannot be carried on

with such weapons as avail against flesh and blood; they are inapplicable here. Ours is nothing less than a warfare of extermination, in which no quarter is to be given, no mercy shewn; but it is carried on against the spiritual wickedness that is within us, and against that also which is around us. Our weapon against the one and the other is to be the sword of the Spirit, the spiritual sword, that is, the Word of God, His truth, His will, His law, as it has been revealed and expounded to us by Jesus Christ. This we shall find to be a two-edged sword, piercing through even to our consciences, when we apply it home to ourselves, and powerful to rend asunder all hypocrisies, and to discern between right and wrong, when we apply it to the conduct of other men. "The Word of God," says the Apostle, "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."\* It goes in as it were between the joints of the harness, and finds its way to the heart of a man, notwithstanding the sevenfold armour of worldliness in which he has encased himself.

This sword we are to be exercising, with this we are to be always on the alert. We may never "put it into the sheath"—we have thrown away the scabbard—we are not only Christ's servants,

\* Heb. iv. 12.

but his soldiers ; we have vowed to be his faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end. The enemy is within us ; many strong-holds of Satan there are in our hearts, which have to be beaten down ; and surely if we have really and resolutely tried, and spared not, but have brought the Word of God to bear upon our own selves without flinching, and without compromise, we have already learnt by experience that we are not wielding a broken reed. And though it be a feeble thing in the sight of men, yet it is stronger than all the wisdom of man, when used in spiritual conflict. And if it is such in its operation on our own hearts, experience has also shewn, long since, that it is the only weapon with which we can hope to prevail against the spiritual darkness and iniquity that is around us. The attempt to convert men to the Christian faith by force, by threats, by entreaties, has ever failed. Long and woful experience has shewn, that all such attempts, whatever temporary success they may have, are failures in the long run, and worse than failures ; for so far as they succeed, they entail heart-burnings and divisions, or else they encourage hypocritical pretences, and hollow professions. They generate wounds and sores, which are not so readily healed as was the ear of Malchus by the touch of Christ, but which canker and smoulder on from age to age. It is evident to us now, though it was not so evident to our Christian forefathers in times gone by,

that Christ intended his Gospel to make its way by the slower but surer process of persuasion and conviction, by the rousing of the conscience, by the touching of the heart.

This course we are to follow, not merely in our intercourse with the heathen who have no knowledge of Christ at all, but also in our conduct towards those of our fellow-Christians, who are not of the same household of the faith with ourselves. Any thing like persecution is out of the question ; but every attempt to browbeat them, to treat them harshly and contemptuously, is unbecoming to ourselves as Christians, while it is likely to repel them further from us, instead of drawing them nearer. By all means let us take every opportunity of reasoning with them temperately, and bringing them, if we can, to an acknowledgment of their error, always resting our argument on the Word of God, and grounding ourselves upon that. But far be it from us to rail at them because we cannot persuade them, or to think that we shall accomplish by blustering what we fail to do by friendly remonstrance and calm reasoning. Still less should we venture to launch the thunders of the most High upon them, and to anticipate what will be the future judgment of God upon their misbelief. “Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? To his own Lord he standeth or falleth.” \*

\* Rom. xiv. 4.



And this principle may be carried much further still, and continually applied in our daily conversation. If we could reclaim a friend or a neighbour from an error, and bring him to be of the same mind with ourselves, the proper way to do this manifestly is, to treat him as a rational being, and to appeal to his reason and his heart, not to think that we can lord it over him in such a matter by the force of our authority, not to storm at him if he continues to disagree with us, but to shew all patience and forbearance towards him. The still small voice will do more with him than the whirlwind that would shake the wilderness of Cades. Be sure, if he is to be won at all, it is by gentle persuasion, not by violent language. It is quite possible to be in earnest, very strongly and strenuously in earnest, without losing your temper. But if once you give way to passion, you impair the force of your reason, and you take up weapons which, whatever effect they may have upon your adversary, will be sure to inflict a grievous injury upon yourself. They will rankle in your bosom, and disturb your peace of mind. Those who take up such a sword, will sooner or later suffer by it.

If Christ intended to force the will and the reason of men, he could do so without your help. We are reminded by him in the concluding part of my text, that the legions of Angels are at his command. At present he suffers his will to be

resisted, his cross to be trampled on, his sacred body to be buffeted and scourged, very much as in his last hours on earth he permitted his enemies to triumph over him, to scourge, to insult, to crucify him. "Suffer ye thus far," he says, as he said that night to his Disciples in the garden. How far, and how long he will suffer all this, we cannot tell. But we know there is a limit to his endurance, and to-day we look forward to that uncertain, but not very distant time, when he will appear, not in his great humility, but in his glorious majesty; not as the meek and lowly Jesus, healing the ear of his enemy, and standing speechless before his judge; but he will come to be himself the Judge of men, and he will cover his enemies with everlasting shame.

And those legions of Angels, whom even now he has at his command, will accompany him at his second Advent. So say the Scriptures of the New Testament, and so said the prophet Daniel, long before. "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened."\* What is the nature of those blessed beings, and how they are employed in the meanwhile, is more than we may at present know. Yet the Apostle tells us something concerning them. "Are they not all ministering spirits," he says, "sent forth to minister for

\* Dan. vii. 10.

them that shall be heirs of salvation?"\* What then? May we not believe that they are ever treading the steps of that unseen ladder, which is set between heaven and earth, ever ascending and descending upon the children of men, as they did upon the gracious Son of God; some perhaps coming invisibly with messages of comfort, and whispering to the lowly and meek, that the Lord is with them, that they are blessed among men; and some ministering to those who are in bodily distress, as they ministered to Christ after his fasting in the wilderness; some occupied in refreshing the troubled spirit, after it has been wrestling in a mortal agony, as Christ was comforted after his agony in the garden; while others are carrying some poor Lazarus home to his rest in Abraham's bosom, or rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, or stedfastly beholding the face of our Father which is in Heaven.† Whatever be their service, this we know, that they fail not to fulfil the will of Him whom they serve. And at that last day of days, all the hosts of them will assemble, and the Lord will be among them; and they will go forth to gather the elect from the four quarters of the heavens; and the trumpet will sound to which no human ear may be deaf; and that sword of justice will be drawn which will not be put up into its sheath until it has seen its desire upon its enemies.

\* Heb. i. 14.      † Matt. xviii. 10.

For that day we have yet a little while left us to prepare—and that it may not come upon you unawares, my brethren, be daily making preparation for it, turning ever and returning to the Lord, with hearty faith and humble prayer and diligent self-examination; judging yourselves now, that you may not then be judged. Be assured that the Lord will make no long tarrying; the time will soon be here—the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Cast off quickly therefore, the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Behold, the Lord is at hand. Prepare ye young and old, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, and thou too, O my soul, prepare to meet Him!



## LECTURE VII.

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### THE TWO MIRACULOUS DRAUGHTS OF FISHES.

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LUKE v. 5.—“*And Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.*”

THIS passage brings before us the Disciples of Jesus, while pursuing their humble occupation as fishermen on the sea of Galilee. It is related that on two separate occasions, after spending all the night in their boats, toiling with unrequited labour, they were gladdened in the morning by the appearance of their Lord, who encouraged them to cast forth their nets once more, and rewarded their efforts with success, giving them immediately an astonishing draught of fishes. Undoubtedly the capture of a great multitude of fishes at a single cast of the net, was a thing which however extraordinary, would not necessarily be looked upon as supernatural. It was not like the raising of the dead to life, or the

sudden restoration of the palsied limb, a thing which spoke plainly for itself. It would only be determined to be a miracle by the circumstances under which it happened. But that their nets should be filled as soon as they were cast in at the bidding of Christ, at the very spot where they had toiled throughout the night without catching anything, in the morning when they had given up all hope, these circumstances at once directed the Disciples to attribute their good fortune to the power of their divine Master, kindly but secretly exerted in their behalf. Each time the miracle was attended with circumstances of peculiar interest, which would demand more than one discourse for their full consideration. But there arises also a special interest from viewing the two miracles together, and observing the relation which they bear to each other.

Before however I enter upon this subject, let me explain two points upon which it is very likely that some misunderstanding may exist—points not very material indeed in themselves, except that a knowledge of them helps to give us a more clear notion of the sacred history, so that we can draw the picture of it in our minds with greater accuracy and clearness; a thing which surely we must all desire to do. The waters upon which the Disciples fished, and upon or by the side of which Jesus did so many wonderful works, are

commonly spoken of in Scripture under the name of the Sea of Galilee or the Sea of Tiberias. We might therefore perhaps at first suppose that it was the outer sea, the salt, the boundless ocean, which was the scene of these events ; whereas in reality the word *sea* is here applied to an inland sheet of water, a fresh-water lake, through which the river Jordan flowed, entering it at the northern extremity, and flowing from it at the southern. This I think it is useful to bear in mind, in order that we may form a true notion of the history ; for there is nothing to show that Jesus ever went to the sea-coast, according to our more common acceptation of the word.

The second thing which I would mention is, that we are not to suppose the coasts of this sea or lake of Galilee were a lonely wilderness, unfrequented except by the few fishermen who gained a precarious subsistence upon the waters. On the contrary, they were studded with flourishing towns and villages, and the district was the most populous in the Holy Land, with the exception perhaps of that in which Jerusalem was included. Our Lord therefore, in choosing such a region for the scene of his ministry, was not doing as St. John the Baptist had done, who began his preaching in the wilderness, and attracted the people from the distant cities and villages to hear him. Jesus placed himself in the midst of the



crowded city. He sought the multitudes, as they also sought him. He associated with the people, so that he was called the friend of publicans and sinners. The sides of the Galilean lake were bright and fertile and animated and joyous, quite in keeping with the glad tidings which Jesus came to preach, and quite a contrast to the gloomy solitudes in which John the Baptist dwelt; though those solitudes were well suited to enforce the Baptist's doctrine, the stern, wholesome doctrine of repentance, which it was his especial mission to inculcate.

And now, applying ourselves to the two miracles which I have proposed to consider to-day, we find that the one was performed at the commencement of our Lord's ministry, when he called his Disciples to forsake their worldly calling and to follow him, the other at the end of his sojourn on earth, after he was risen from the dead, and when he was about to give his final commission, and to entrust to those Disciples the great, the superhuman task of carrying abroad to all mankind the knowledge of his saving truth.

Upon the former of the two occasions, after working the miracle by which he shewed his care for their bodily needs and his sympathy in their worldly pursuits, he suddenly called them to leave all and follow him. And here we should remember how much that command involved to those Disciples. In a worldly point of view

they were not entirely their own masters, not free to go where they liked, and to follow whom they would. They had their domestic ties and duties, like other men. One of them, Peter, was a married man. What was the condition of his brother Andrew we know not; but the remaining two, James and John, had an aged father and mother; and their father Zebedee was with them in their boat at the time this call was given to them. However, notwithstanding all these considerations, which under other circumstances might have had great weight, they doubtless felt that they had received such a call as no earthly tie could warrant them in disobeying. And perhaps they had a presentiment of the truth which Jesus afterwards declared to them, that they who leave house, and lands, and wife, and children, and father, and mother, for the kingdom of heaven's sake, shall receive manifold more in this present life.\* They might well be assured that the Lord would provide for those friends whom they thus forsook at his bidding, and that they were all safe in the hands of Him who had shown himself so able and so willing to supply their needs. And so without any hesitation, without waiting to arrange this or that, or even to take leave of friends, they brought their ships to land, and then at once left all and followed him. And he said that from thenceforth they

\* Luke xviii. 30.

should catch men. They were to be his fishermen—to fish in the troubled turbid waters of this world, that the souls of men that are therein may be caught, and may, as it were, be transferred to that “pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.”\* Even thus, as the Psalmist says, had David been chosen by the Lord; while he was at his earthly calling he was taken away from the sheepfold, that he might become a shepherd of men, that he might feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.†

But there is one point in the narrative which it is very instructive for us to observe. We see in this and in several other passages of Scripture how God falls in with men, and calls them, in the midst of their ordinary occupations; how He adapts His methods to their circumstances, and uses their worldly business as an instrument for His own gracious purposes. These men were fishers; and so it is by a miraculous draught of fishes that they are made to feel the power and goodness of Christ. The wise men of the East were in the habit of observing the motions of the stars; so by the leading of a star they were brought to the cradle of the infant Saviour. That was a guidance which their previous habits of life had prepared them to follow most readily. And

\* Rev. xxii. 1.

† Ps. lxxviii. 71.

thus also to the Samaritan woman who came to draw water from the well, Christ preaches of the water of life, which shall be a well-spring of salvation in the hearts of all true believers. To those whom he had just been feeding with the meat that perisheth, he speaks of the bread of Heaven which endureth to everlasting life. To Peter when he is hungry he sends a vision, bidding him kill and eat of all manner of animals whether clean or unclean; thus teaching him even through the appetite of his lower nature, and leading him to conclude for himself, that if the distinction of meats was done away, so also was the distinction of men, that henceforth the Gentiles were in God's sight as the Jews, and that nothing which God had blessed was to be called common or unclean.

Now in all these instances there is undoubtedly a lesson which we may draw for ourselves. And the lesson seems to be this, that we must look for God each one of us in our own daily path of life. He is most likely to be found there, if we have eyes to see Him, and ears to hear Him; beckoning and calling to us, by some means and opportunities which He finds suitable to His purpose. In order to meet with God it is not necessary that the tradesman should leave his counter, or that the workman should cease from his labour, or that the soldier should lay down his arms, or that the lawyer should

deny himself to his client, or that the magistrate should come down from his bench. Do you think that God is only with you when you turn into some lonely by-way, only at hand when you go into your chamber and are still? "If they shall say unto you; behold he is in the desert, go not forth: behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not."\* He is *not* there in such a sense as to be nowhere else; but He is everywhere, in the crowded thoroughfare as in the desert; in the house of business, as in the house of prayer. From the area to the house-top He watches you at all your various occupations, and now and then out of the very heat and stress of your work He strikes a spark, which if your heart is as fitted as it should be to receive such sparks, will of a sudden make you glow all over, either with a sense of His great goodness and mercy towards you, or with an earnest desire for His help and counsel, or with a resolute determination to do His will, or with an irresistible feeling of trust and reliance upon His providence. Such feelings, arising out of the common incidents of our daily walk in life, do sometimes take fast hold of the mind which is disposed to receive them; and casual as they seem in their origin, they lead sometimes to permanent good; and we cannot be wrong in attributing them to the godly

\* Matt. xxiv, 26.

motions of God's Holy Spirit. It is very needful therefore that we should be on the watch for them, and never suppose that when we are at our worldly calling we are out of God's way, and that no heavenly calling can reach us while we are so employed.

But it is time that we should now turn to the second miraculous draught of fishes, related by St. John in the 21st chapter of his Gospel. The circumstances, as I have already said, were very like those of the former miracle. There had been the same fruitless labour as before, continued all the night; then the appearance of Christ in the morning, commanding them to cast the net again, and the immediate success which followed after their obeying his command; with this difference, that now the net, though filled with so many and such great fishes, was not broken as it had been before; and as on the former occasion, he called the fishers away from their nets, to be his servants and Apostles, to catch men for him; so now again he leads them away from their ship, and solemnly charges St. Peter with that pastoral commission, which he had already laid upon them all. "Feed my lambs" he said, "Feed my sheep," "Feed my sheep."

The miracle having in both cases been followed by a declaration respecting the Apostolic office, we can hardly doubt that it was itself intended

to refer to that office. It was meant to be a pledge to those Apostles, and an assurance of the success which awaited them in their new and heavenly calling. It was a token that by them and their colleagues and successors the world should be converted, the heavenly net should be filled, and that though the labour might be long, and for a while without any prospect of reward, yet at last mankind should come as it were in shoals into the receptacle of Christ's Church.

In this light the miracle was understood by the great divines of ancient times. It was considered that by the miraculous draught of fishes, twice repeated, our Lord prefigured to his Apostles the success which they were to have in preaching the Gospel. But whether it was so intended or not, it is certain, as a matter of fact, that the miracle did foreshadow in a remarkable manner the progress and establishment of Christ's Gospel in the world. The conversion of mankind to the Christian faith was no less præternatural than the wonder which was wrought on the waters of the Sea of Galilee. The one event, like the other, could only be accounted for by the invisible working of the Almighty.

The Gospel of Christ at the beginning had no outward circumstances in its favour. Humanly speaking, it commenced its career under every disadvantage. It was committed to the zeal and faithfulness of a few fishermen, and other simple



and unlearned persons, who knew so much of the world, and so much only, as they could survey from the bosom of their own peaceful lake. Rude in their speech, and little versed in the arts of persuasion, they were commissioned to preach doctrines most repugnant to human prejudice and pride, and facts most difficult to be believed. Yet at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, they began their ministry among a crowd of people, who were come to keep one of the feasts of the old religion and were little disposed to give credit to any new doctrines that might be offered to them at such a time; and yet there and then, Galileans as they were, and the humblest of Galileans, they stood up before that assembly of proud and bigoted Jews, collected out of many distant lands, they spoke to every man in his own tongue, they put to silence the scoffers, they rebuked the murderers of their Lord, they maintained his resurrection, they exhorted their hearers to be baptized in his name. And the glorious result was, that on that very day there were added to them about 3,000 souls.\*

And scarcely less wonderful was the final and complete establishment of Christianity in later times. For 300 years after the death of their Lord, the ministers of the Gospel continued to preach with various and doubtful success. It could not be said exactly, that they toiled all the

\* Acts ii.

night and caught nothing, because they did make many converts in different parts of the world ; but no sooner had they gained any considerable success in winning souls to Christ, than a persecution arose, which undid a great part of their work, scattering the Christian congregations, or consuming them with fire and sword ; and at last there arose one vast, wide-spread, and long-continued persecution, waged by the rulers of this world against the religion of the Gospel, and intended to sweep away all remembrance of Christianity from among mankind. Then were the powers of earth and hell let loose against all who professed themselves to be followers of the holy Jesus. Thousands sealed their testimony with their blood ; while the faith of many waxed cold under such a grievous tyranny ; and to save their lives, they foreswore their religion. But at the last, when to the eye of a worldling the fate of the Gospel might appear inevitable, a sudden change was wrought by the mysterious decrees of the Divine Providence. The dark night came to an end, the day broke ; the net was thrown out once more, and this time was filled with great fishes, and yet it was not broken. The rulers themselves were converted ; the kingdoms of this world became the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ, and the nations flocked into the fold of the Saviour. Such an event, so sudden, so vast, so beyond all hope, was surely the work of an

Almighty hand, no less than the wonders of the Feast of Pentecost, or the miracles of the Sea of Galilee.

And such, in a greater or less degree, has been the history of the progress of the Gospel among the heathen, up to the present day. It is one continued commentary upon the text which tells us that Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God that giveth the increase.\* His human instruments must be ever at work, and woe to them if they preach not the Gospel; but they must not expect to see the fruit of their labours; or if they think they see some fruit to-day, they must not be surprised nor out of heart if it is all cut down, dried up, and withered on the morrow. They are doing God service—they are sowing good seed, which will not all be cast away; and He whom they serve will, at the last, crown their labours abundantly, though it may be in a manner altogether unexpected, when the thing appears quite hopeless, by some sudden start, some glorious burst of light, so that their poor agency in the matter shall seem to be of no account, and all men shall say, “this is God’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

As therefore the miracle which we considered last Sunday led us to remark, that the kingdom of Christ is to be spread on earth by *peaceful means*, by persuasion and reasoning, not by force

\* 1 Cor. iii. 6.

and violence, so the miracle now before us seems to point to the conclusion, that for the accomplishment of this great purpose the utmost *patience* and perseverance are required, and the faith which hopes even against hope. And we are never to give over or relax our exertions, because we seem to be at a stand-still, carried back by the tide as fast as we advance with our oars; for in a moment that we little expect, we may be caught up and wafted by God's grace into the harbour where we would be. Only it behoves us to do our very best, to spare no pains, to abound in all zeal, in godly sincerity and earnestness; and then we may cheerfully leave the issue in God's hands.

I say this in order that none of us may be disquieted, or may begin to listen to the scoffs of the unbeliever, because Christ's Gospel does not make that regular steady advance among the heathen which we should all desire to see, and for the want of which persons of shallow faith are liable to be offended. But really the same truth holds good in the Christian warfare of every faithful disciple of Jesus. We are engaged in an incessant struggle against the powers of evil which are deeply seated in our hearts. We seem to make little progress on the whole. If we gain a point, draw a little nearer to the standard at which we are aiming, we presently fall off again. We are baffled, beaten, humbled

again and again ; thoroughly convinced that in ourselves there is no good thing, and only supported by the undying hope that all our imperfections will at last be swallowed up and lost in the perfection of Christ, and that he will clothe us with a robe of innocence and purity which we could never weave out of the frail tissue of our own righteousness. That robe he will undoubtedly give us at the last day, if we earnestly desire and seek it now ; and it will be only through his merits that we shall receive it ; it will be of his handiwork, not ours.

We can boast of nothing, we can accomplish nothing ; yet the truth is, that our endeavours to amend our lives, if they are made in good earnest, with patience and perseverance, and in humble reliance on God's grace, are by no means fruitless. They bear fruit in three different ways. For, in the first place, if we did not make them, we should be far worse than we are ; if we yielded to the tide, without labouring at our oars, we should be carried still lower down the stream. And, in the second place, while we are thus heartily struggling, the grace of God comes and wafts us imperceptibly, like a gentle breeze, so that we are gradually improving, though without being ourselves conscious of the change. And lastly, this constant struggle, this unceasing endeavour after goodness and holiness, even if it were attended with no present good

consequences at all, would still be indispensable ; for it is the condition upon which depends our final acceptance with Christ and God. It is this toiling all the night, even though we take nothing, which will bring Christ to us on the morning of the Resurrection, when he will give us to share in his perfection, and will make our joy to be full.



## LECTURE VIII.

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### THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.

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MATTHEW XIV., 15, 16.—“ *And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying : this is a desert place, and the time is now past ; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, they need not depart : give ye them to eat.*”

THE miraculous feeding of the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes is remarkable as being the only miracle which is recorded by all the four Evangelists. They have all given a full account of it, and each has related some particulars, which are omitted by the other three. It is, therefore, a matter of much interest, not altogether free from difficulty, to compare the four accounts together, and to blend them into one consecutive narrative. And in order that you may do this, if you think fit, in your own private reading, I will mention the chapters of the several Gospels in which the miracle is to be found. Those chapters



are the 14th of St. Matthew, the 6th of St. Mark, the 9th of St. Luke, and the 6th of St. John. But you will easily find these passages, if you have a Bible with references in the margin, which I may say in passing, is an indispensable help to the proper study and right understanding of the Holy Scriptures. We may also observe that this miracle was repeated by Our Lord, when under circumstances very similar he fed a multitude of four thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes, as we read both in St. Matthew's and Mark's Gospels. The two miracles, though so exactly similar, would afford a good practical lesson, if we were to view them in conjunction. But I must forbear from doing this to-day, there being even in the former of the two so much of interest, and so much of practical teaching, that I can hope in this one discourse to bring before you only a few of its details, and to unfold only a portion of its deep meaning and significance.

The Twelve Apostles, as we read in the 6th chapter of St. Mark, had been sent out by their Master in different directions, two and two, to preach that men should repent. Having fulfilled their mission, they returned with joy, and told Jesus what things they had done, and what they had taught. Jesus took them apart into a desert place, an uninhabited region, that they might rest awhile from their labours. And for this purpose they went away in a boat by themselves. But the

people saw them depart, and followed them by land, issuing forth in crowds out of all the cities near the lake ; and they made such good speed, that they outstripped the boat, and arrived at the landing-place before it. Jesus, when he landed, had compassion upon the people, because they were as sheep without a shepherd ; and though his purpose of being in privacy was frustrated, if we may use such a word, by their thronging about him, he would not send them away, or leave them, but continued teaching them till the day was far spent.

At length the Disciples, with a kind intention no doubt, interrupted him, and recommended, that as no food was to be procured for the people on the spot, and many of them had come from afar, they should be dismissed, that they might go and buy themselves victuals in the country round. We can imagine the surprise of the Disciples, when their Master answered them thus : “ They need not depart, give ye them to eat.” They might well say that if they were able to buy as much as two hundred pennyworth of bread, even so large a quantity would go but a little way to satisfy the hunger of such a multitude ; and when in order to prove the faith of Philip, one of his Disciples, he put the question to him “ Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat ?” Philip, in his perplexity, could only talk of the two hundred pennyworth, and say that that quantity

would not be enough, that every one should take a little. It did not occur to him to say, "Thou Lord, whom all Nature obeys, thou canst feed the hungry; speak but the word, and they shall be replenished."

However, there was found in the company one little lad who had with him five barley loaves and two small fishes. The discovery of this small supply was reported to Jesus by one of the Disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, though not with any hope that it would be sufficient; for he said, "What are they among so many?" Jesus, however, had known all along what he would do. He would take that supply, scanty as it was, and bless it, and make it increase and abound, so as to exceed the necessities of the people. He took therefore the loaves and fishes, and commanded that the men should be made to sit down: and then follows a minute description of the miracle, such as only an eye-witness would give; and it enables us ourselves almost to be eye-witnesses of the scene. The Evangelists all take notice that it was a grassy place, most probably a meadow by the side of the lake, not a rough and rocky place on the hills above: and the grass was green, says St. Mark, for the season was the early spring, before the valleys had begun to be parched up by the drought of summer. The *men* only sat down, according to St. John, and not the women and children; and so it was

only the men that were enumerated at the end of the meal, for we read in St. Matthew that there were five thousand men, besides women and children. They sat down "in companies," says St. Matthew. But here St. Mark uses a particular word, which seems to show that those companies were regularly formed in oblong squares, so as to resemble the plots or parterres of a garden, each containing either fifty or a hundred men. Then our Lord looked up to heaven, and gave thanks, and distributed to the Disciples, and the Disciples to the multitude. Thus he enabled the Disciples to fulfil his command, "Give ye them to eat."

And so "they did all eat and were filled;" and after that, as St. John tells us, our Lord used these remarkable words to his Disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." Upon which the twelve Disciples went forth among the multitudes with their baskets—for a Jew when travelling, usually carried a basket—and they filled their twelve baskets with the fragments that remained over and above to them that had eaten. So that the quantity remaining, when all had eaten, was very much greater than the original supply. Thus the nature and extent of the miracle was in a manner set before the people in a visible form: and St. John says that when they saw it, they exclaimed: "This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world."

The reason for their expressing themselves in this way appears to have been, not simply that what they had witnessed was a marvellous display of power, but that it was just such a display of power as they expected to be made by the promised Messiah, when he came. For they expected that Christ would do the same miracles which Moses had done before him; and that as Moses had fed the people in the wilderness in a miraculous manner, so also would Christ.\* This expectation of theirs was now fulfilled—though we find from St. John that when the first enthusiasm was over, they began to disparage the miracle of Jesus in comparison of that of Moses, and they drew the conclusion that Jesus was inferior to Moses. “What sign doest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee; what dost *thou* work? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat,” as much as to say, that whereas Moses had given the people bread *from heaven*, Jesus had given them nothing more than the common bread of earth. Upon which Jesus went on to declare that he was himself the bread of God, which came down from heaven, to give life unto the world: and then he entered upon a deep discourse, full of mystery, which we have not time to follow at present.

And now, having briefly considered the *history*

\* See Trench on the Miracles, p. 271.

of this miracle, let us endeavour to gather up that which remains to us over and above the history, I mean the practical instruction which it may have been intended to afford. It is fraught with practical lessons, some of which are plain and obvious, while others we find lying a little beneath the surface. For instance, when Jesus lifted up his eyes and gave thanks, before he distributed the loaves and fishes, he seems to have been setting us an example, that we at our daily meals should remember to give thanks to Him upon whom, as the Psalmist says, the eyes of all do wait; who giveth them their meat in due season; who openeth His hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.\* And sure I am, that if we eat our daily bread with a thankful spirit, it will go further, and have a better relish, than if we eat as the beasts that perish, without any thought of God, or with murmuring and discontent.

Again, at the end of the meal, our Lord commanded the Disciples to gather up the fragments, for this reason, that there might be nothing lost. Is it not striking to see the bounteous giver of the feast so careful over the comparatively small quantity that remained? Why should he to whose creative power there was no limit, prescribe economy to his servants, and husband the resources which his own hand had furnished,

\* Psalm cxlv.

and could again furnish abundantly, whenever he pleased? Clearly he was teaching men a lesson; he was admonishing us, that whether we be rich or whether we be poor, we are not permitted to be wasteful of the blessings which God has given us. However He may seem to lavish those blessings upon us—however great an excess we may have above what we ourselves actually want, we must make it our concern to see that nothing be lost. God has not given us anything, in order that we may trifle it away, or wrap it up in a napkin, and leave it unused.

If we have a superfluity, we are responsible for the way in which we use that superfluity. This principle seems naturally to flow from our Lord's command to his Disciples; and how widely and variously it may be applied, I need not now stay to shew.

But besides these more obvious instructions, which are presented to us at first sight, I think this miracle contains some teaching of a deeper kind. I have already observed that it was wrought immediately upon the return of the Apostles from their first missionary journey, and that soon after it had been wrought Jesus took occasion from it to declare that he was himself the bread of heaven. When viewed thus in connexion with what took place before and after it, the miracle itself becomes endowed with a spiritual meaning, and it seems to have a bearing



upon the manner in which Christ has chosen that his Gospel shall be preached, his heavenly bread distributed to mankind.

Pursuing then the train of thought which is thus opened to us, we may observe, that the Saviour did not, as he might have done, create out of nothing a supply of food for the multitudes; but he took the small quantity which was offered to him, insufficient as it was, and by an exercise of his power increased it, and made it sufficient. In like manner, he does not, as he might by his own simple action, feed the famishing souls of men with the bread of salvation; but he uses earthly means, human instruments, and makes them to be the dispensers of his word; and though the ministry of the Gospel, being left in a few hands, and those few very much weakened by human infirmities, may seem to be stinted and inadequate, falling far short of the necessity of the case, yet in his own mysterious way and in his own time he blesses it, and makes it to increase exceedingly, and abound. The little leaven leavens the whole lump, the grain of mustard seed becomes a mighty tree.

We often see in earthly affairs that very great results are brought about by agencies and appliances which seem wholly disproportionate. A few men agree together on a subject, and urge their opinions upon the public mind. For some

time they scarcely gain a hearing; when they do, they are perhaps at first treated as visionaries, and covered with contempt; but they persevere—they feel that they have truth on their side—and in time they make others feel it also; they gain supporters by degrees, and become so strong at last that they sweep away all opposition. A handful of soldiers, under a great commander, stand boldly against innumerable odds, and advance in the face of difficulties which may seem insurmountable. They conquer and conquer, and by their undaunted heroism save their country; for the arm of the Lord is with them. And so, in general, we believe as regards our worldly concerns, that our cause, if it be a good one, is never to be despaired of, however slender may be our means of promoting it.

And so it has ever been with the cause of Christ's Gospel. When he ascended into Heaven, he devolved upon his Twelve Apostles the office of making his salvation known in all the world. "Go ye," he said, "and preach the Gospel to every creature." And what were those twelve, humanly speaking, among so many? But he supplied their insufficiency with his miraculous help, and made them to abound more and more, so as to be all things to all men. And thus at the present day, when we consider the case of our missionaries, not more than a hundred or two in number, planted at wide intervals in a

country which contains a hundred millions of idolaters, and when we consider that they are not only few, but that they are frail erring men like ourselves, full of infirmities both of body and spirit, and altogether unsupported by those miraculous aids by which the first preachers of the Gospel were so greatly assisted, and when we bear in mind the disadvantage under which they work as strangers in a foreign land, and the deeply rooted prejudices against which they have to contend, we cannot but feel that, while these men are the intermediate instruments through whom Christ is pleased to work, it can only be by some secret hidden virtue which of themselves they have not, by some supernatural energy and power co-operating with them, that their efforts are to be crowned with success. But again, remembering that they are soldiers of the Cross, preachers of that Faith which alone is true and which must be established in all the world, we have no fear as to the result, provided only we who send them forth are really in earnest, and they who are sent are sincerely devoted to their work. If this is the case, we are sure that He who has promised to be with his servants always, though not testifying to them now with outward signs and wonders, is still going before them with his preventing grace, and undermining the strongholds of superstition which they have to attack. And as on the two last Sundays, we discovered from the

miracles which we then considered, lessons bearing on the labours of the missionary, in the one case a lesson of meekness and gentleness, and in the other a lesson of patience and perseverance, so here we seem to be taught confidence and hope. For we are encouraged to rely on the unseen arm of the Lord, and to believe that however outward appearances may be against us, however over-matched the ministers of Christ may seem to be, we need never despair, because they that be for us are more than they that be against us.

But another reflection of a different kind has been drawn from this miracle, a reflection which I cannot entirely pass over now, because it will lead me by a natural transition to the subject with which I am to conclude my discourse. We have seen that after the miraculous meal was over, the fragments that remained over and above exceeded by much the original supply. By this circumstance, as has been well and truly said,\* we are led to consider the blessedness of a liberal spirit; we are reminded that the outgoings of charity return with increase to the bosom from whence they proceeded, that there is a largeness of heart, which according to the proverb, scattereth and yet increaseth; while there is a selfishness which withholdeth more than is meet, but it only tendeth to poverty.†

If this truth is not directly inculcated by the

\* Trench on the Miracles, p. 270.      † Prov. xi. 24.

miracle before us, it seems very naturally and beautifully to arise out of it. But without dwelling upon it any longer now, let me pass on from it, or rather let me make a special application of it, now that I proceed to the appeal which I have undertaken to make to you on behalf of one of the most valuable of our parochial charities. You are well aware that we have among us a staff of district visitors—I would their number were threefold greater than it is—persons who have kindly volunteered to assist the clergy in visiting the poorer districts of this parish, for the purpose of seeking out the desolate, helping the miserable, admonishing the godless, and assisting all, as occasion may arise, with their friendly counsel and advice.

Say not that they who concern themselves about the souls of men have enough on their hands, without undertaking to relieve their bodily necessities also—say not that for these bodily necessities provision is amply made by our system of parochial relief. For even where parochial relief is given, it is very properly confined to a bare subsistence; often it scarcely amounts even to that. It only professes to supply necessities; and the ministration of comforts is seldom among its tender mercies. In many of these cases there is a strong call upon private charity to eke out the pittance which the hand of the public has so sparingly and grudgingly bestowed. And many more cases

there are which parochial relief never reaches at all—some cases where poverty is just struggling on the brink of pauperism, and may by a little timely relief be saved from falling into that state of dependence which is a slough of despond, very apt to break the spirit and demoralise the whole character of a man. Other cases also there are not a few, where pride is seen engaged in a sort of death-struggle with poverty, pride sitting in its chamber alone, hugging its rags, and almost starving before it will condescend to beg. Such cases we find out in our round of visits; and we can minister to them. It is not so great a degradation to receive help from us, as it would be to stand at the door of the workhouse, and crave the morsel which would be doled out there. And if they will not go and ask, it is no business of the public officer to search them out. It must needs be that public charity, like all other charities, often works crossly, here missing its object, there bestowing itself unnecessarily, helping many who ought to do without help, and overlooking others who pine in misery and want. Now here our District Visiting Society steps in with something approaching to an organised system, and to a certain extent supplies the deficiencies, the unavoidable shortcomings and omissions of the legal relief.

You may say that the poor ought to make more provision than they do for a time of distress, and that a great part of their misery is but a just and

necessary consequence of their own imprudence. This may be very true; and yet it must be borne in mind that this improvidence is very much the result of the system under which they live; that for three centuries our people have been subject to the influence of a law, which with all its undoubted advantages on the score of humanity, has a manifest tendency to encourage improvidence, by holding out to the poor man a certain refuge and maintenance if the worst comes to the worst. We must be careful therefore, how we visit upon them too strictly a fault which in some degree is due to the Institutions of the Country.

Of this I am sure, that no one can go on visiting these poor people, witnessing their privations, listening to their complaints, admiring their patience and resignation, if he is not provided with the means of rendering them some little assistance, as a token of his own sympathy and kind feeling towards them. It is not in flesh and blood to go from day to day among those scenes of want, and to hear those pitiful accents of complaint, if we are ever to hold our hands, and to cry only "Be ye warmed, be ye fed." And with a view to the success of our ministry, that we may attain our great object, and do good to their souls; it is quite necessary that we should begin by doing something for the relief of their bodily wants. It was thus that Christ carried on his earthly



ministry, healing the sick, and feeding the multitudes, and thus appealing to the souls of men, through their lower nature. His example sanctions what, even without his example, we should be forced to do. And now that the winter is come, and a season, as we may fear, of unusual distress is at hand, I make my annual appeal to you in the confident hope, that you will supply us with the means which we require for this purpose, for Christ's sake.



*By the same Author.*

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